THEATRICAL BRISTOL

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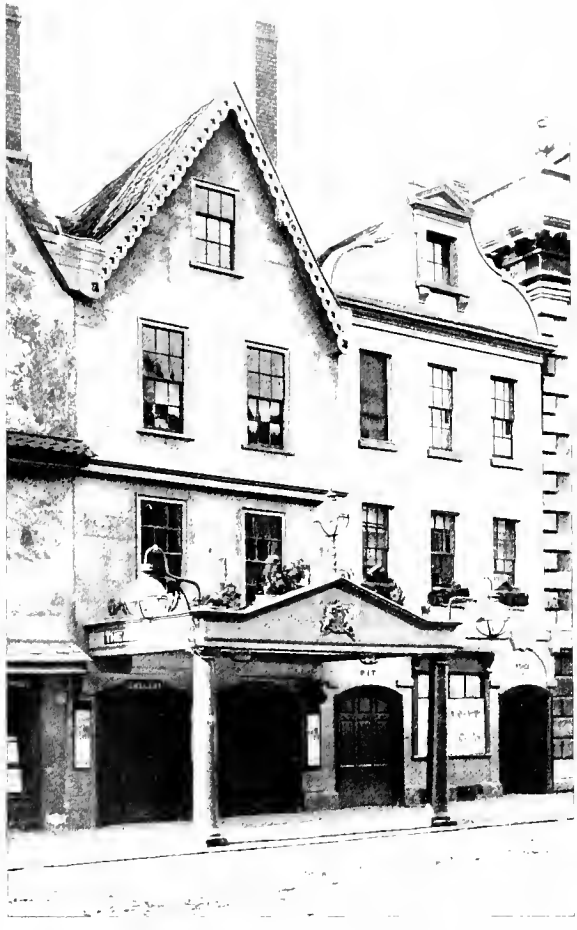

Photo. by Fred Little, Bristol.

THEATRE ROYAL, BRISTOL IN 1887.

THEATRICAL BRISTOL

BY

GUY TRACEY WATTS

OF LINCOLN'S INN, BARRISTER-AT-LAW

BRISTOL

HOLLOWAY AND SON, LTD.

1915

A

TO

H. M. WALBROOK, Esq.

CONTENTS

AN APOLOGY.

" It is not on what I write, but on my reader's curiosity I rely to be read through."—Colley Cibber.

The fact that, hitherto, no comprehensive study of the Theatre in Bristol has ever appeared in print, constitutes of itself, I trust, a sufficient apology for the existence of the present work. It is astonishing that a subject of such interest should for so long have been neglected, for there is probably no other provincial city which possesses a dramatic history of greater continuity, or one which more exactly reflects in microcosm the shifting conditions of the London stage. Several writers have indeed, contributed at various times and in varying degrees to the sum of our present knowledge, and it would be impossible, not to say unjust, were I to pass over in silence the names of those who have materially assisted in the compilation of this history.

Chief amongst these is the name of Mr. William Tyson who died in October, 1851. Originally employed in the office of a Bristol solicitor, Mr. Tyson spent much of his leisure in the collection of books, and subsequently set up in Clare Street as a professional bookseller. He was connected for a period of twenty-five years with the Bristol " Mirror," and incidentally bears the distinction of having been the first shorthand writer engaged to report the public proceedings of the city.

It is regrettable that one so deeply versed in details of local antiquarian interest should have found no opportunity in which to complete a history of theatrical Bristol. The writing of such was, I believe, at one time contemplated by him, and there is little doubt that had he carried his purpose into effect, we should have a work in every way worthy of its subject. Such information, however, as Mr. Tyson possessed, (and it relates for the most part to the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries), he gave most willingly to others, and though its scope is limited, it is none the less remarkable for its clearness and accuracy.

Mr. Richard Jenkins who died in 1836, dealt with another period of our theatrical history. In his early youth, Mr. Jenkins had been a pupil of Hannah More; later he became an attorney, but finding that the law offered little prospect of bringing him a fortune (an experience not uncommon even in our own day), he abandoned it for a position in the Customs, which we have every reason to suppose he fulfilled with credit to himself and the government by whom he was employed. Mr. Jenkins, besides being an enthusiastic admirer of Chatterton, made more than one attempt at dramatic composition. He was the author of "One Rake in a Thousand,"—a long-forgotten farce—which in its day was performed both at Bristol and Bath, and also of a more ambitious work entitled "Married Man," a comedy in four acts. Under the pseudonym of "Dramaticus" he became an occasional contributor to the "Mirror," at that time the leading Bristol Journal, and in 1826 Mr. Jenkins published (for private circulation only) his "Memoirs of the Bristol Stage, from the period of the Theatre at Jacob's Well, down to the Present Time; with notices, bio-

graphical and critical, of some of the most celebrated comedians who have appeared on its boards." About eighty or a hundred copies are said to have been printed, but of these, the majority were destroyed in a fire which broke out at Mr. Jenkins's lodgings in Queen Square, in 1831. Several copies are however, preserved in the Municipal Library, as well as in private collections.

The book is no more than it purports to be, viz.: the memoirs of an old gentleman who, as an amateur, interested himself in the fortunes of a local theatre, and was at the same time personally acquainted with many of the actors who appeared upon its boards. In an introductory chapter to his work Mr. Jenkins describes very clearly the frame of mind in which he is writing: "I am now retired from the noise and bustle of this Great Drama, and find leisure from behind 'the loop-hole of retreat,' not only to take a peep sometimes at what it (sic) going on at this present time, but also a retrospective view of scenes long since passed. I sit down, therefore, to amuse myself (if not others) with tracing the progress and present state of theatricals in this my native city."

Much of his information Mr. Jenkins procured from a Mr. Richard Smith to whom his book was subsequently dedicated. Mr. Smith was an equally enthusiastic play-goer, and his "Bristol Theatre" consists in five large volumes of manuscript which form a part of the Bristol portion of the Municipal Library. Mr. Smith was the son of a well-known local surgeon, and the nephew of the celebrated George Catcott. He was educated at the Grammar School and afterwards followed in his father's professional footsteps, being for long connected with the Royal Infirmary.

instances to verify the accuracy of some of his remarks with respect to facts of unquestionable importance.

The present work has had for its object not merely the co-ordination of all this material, but the addition, wherever possible, of hitherto unpublished information. Especially has an attempt been made to trace the history of the local theatre in relation to the more important history of the metropolitan stage. As the reader will discover in the ensuing narrative, that relationship existed scarcely at all during the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries; in the eighteenth it was more than anything else a relationship of similar influences, and not until the nineteenth century did a direct relationship exist which, as I have sought to demonstrate, was not invariably beneficial to the latter.

The writer wishes to express his indebtedness and thanks to Professor R. H. Thornton, Mr. Charles Pearce, Mr. Tremayne Lane, Mr. Wallace, Mr. Stanley Hutton, Mr. J. Cleveland Skinner, Messrs. Chilton & Sons, and many others, for the assistance they have rendered him in his researches, and particularly to the Assistants of the Municipal Library, from whom he has received constant courtesy and attention.

Bristol, 1915.

CHAPTER ONE.

EARLY RECORDS

CHAPTER ONE.

" When the players are all dead, there need none to be blamed."—Shakespeare.

The earliest allusion to theatrical entertainment in Bristol is mentioned by Mr. Tyson in an article which he contributed, under the signature of " W," to the first issue of " The Bristol Memorialist," published in 1823 :—

" Memorandum,
" That master Canynges hath delivered the 4th day
" of July in the year of our Lord 1470, to Mr. Nicholas
" Bettes vicar of Ratcliffe, Moses Courteryn, Philip
" Bartholomew, and John Brown, procurators of
" Ratcliffe, beforesaid, a new sepulcre well-guilt,
" and cover thereto, an image of God Almighty rysing
" out of the same sepulcre, with all the ordinance
" that longeth thereto : that is to say,

" A lath made of timber and iron work there-to ;
" Item, Thereto longeth HEVEN, made of timber, and stained cloth ;
" Item, Hell, made of timber and iron-work, with devils, the number, thirteen ;

" Item, four knights armed, keeping the sepulcre, with their weapons in their hands, that is to say, two spears, two axes, two paves ;

" Item, the fadre, the crown and visage, the bell with a cross upon it, well-guilt with fine gold ;

" Item, the Holy Ghost coming out of heven into the sepulcre ;

" Item, longeth to the Angels four cheveleres."

" If we may believe the author of the Tragedy of Ella," (1) continues Mr. Tyson, " we are told that piece was ' plaiedd before Mastre Canynge atte hys howse nempte the Rodde Lodge ' ; and also that ' The Parlymente of Sprytes, a most merrie entyrlude, was plaied by the Carmelyte Freeres at Mastre Canynges hys greete howse."

Unfortunately, no authority could be less reliable than that of Thomas Rowlie, and we may reasonably suppose that these are clever, and not altogether unconvincing forgeries from the hand of the youthful Chatterton. Richard Smith, in the first volume of his " Bristol Theatre," refuses to credit their authenticity. " If anyone does," he comments tersely, " I do not row with him in the same boat." Mr. Tyson himself subsequently recognised that they were counterfeit, for in another copy of the " Memorialist " included by Mr. Smith in his collection, there is a marginal note in the author's handwriting against the passage we have cited :— " I now doubt the propriety of introducing this article."

A more reliable record dates about the year 1490. According to the Mayor's Kalendar, after a feast of " spiced cake, bread and wine," held in the Weavers hall near Temple Church, the Mayor and Corporation returned to their homes " ready to receive at their doors St.

(1) Ælla.

Katherine's players, making them to drink at their doors, and rewarding them for their plays," Upon this episode Mr. Tyson furnishes some interesting information in a letter addressed to Mr. Smith :—

" I think it not improbable that the residents in the religious Houses dedicated to St. Catherine were addicted to dramatic representations more than others from the following circumstance, and which is probably the origin of the appelation of ' St. Katherine's Players.'

" Geoffery Gorham (afterwards Abbot of St. Albans) about the year 1100 made a play called Miracula, which he caused to be performed in the *School of St. Catherine* at the Priory of Dunstaple, and which is among the first known, and perhaps the *earliest* dramatic performances in England. . . . . .

" Our Hospital and Church of St. Catherine was beyond Redcliff Hill in the parish of Bedminster, and was founded by one of the Berkeley's about the year 1200. I am much inclined to think that the ' St. Katherine's Players ' mentioned by Ricart were some of this religious fraternity. From the period to which it refers it must have been ' Mysteries ' that were performed, for these representations were not succeeded by ' Moralities ' until the sixteenth century, and the performances of ' Mysteries ' consisted of the Clergy, monks, singing men, choristers, parish Clerks, (who were then *really* Clerks), and public school boys."

Mr. Latimer is of opinion that the performance given by the St. Katherine Players took place in the open streets, and accounts of Mysteries played in other towns lend support to his theory. In Hone's " Ancient

Mysteries," for example, we are told that at Chester there were twenty-nine mysteries performed by the trading companies of that city. "Every companie had his pagiante or parte, which pagiantes were a high scaffold with two rowmes, a higher and a lower, upon four wheels. In the lower they apparelled themselves, and in the higher rowme they played, being all open on the tope, that all beholders might hear and see them. *The places where they plaied them was in every streete.*" Again, in Dugdale's "Antiquities of Warwickshire," we discover a similar mode of procedure with respect to the mysteries at Coventry. "Before the suppression of the monasteries, this city was famous for the pageants that were played therein upon Corpus Christi day; which, occasioning very great confluence of people thither from far and near, was of no small benefit thereto; which pageants, being acted with mighty state and reverence by the friars of this house, had theatres for the several scenes, very large and high, placed upon wheels and drawn to all the eminent parts of the city for the better advantage of the spectators."

It must not be forgotten that at this period a close intimacy existed between the cities of Bristol and Coventry. Both were important centres of the cloth industry, and from the fact that in the roll of the Coventry Guilds, "of Bristol" is appended to the names of several of their members, it is not without the bounds of probability to suppose that their mutual interests comprised theatricals as well as commerce. It may well be that the Bristol Weavers took an active part in the performances of the celebrated Coventry plays, and that their assistance was reciprocated when mysteries were presented at Bristol.

EARLY RECORDS

The year 1532 marks the advent of professional actors to the city. These gave their performances in the Guildhall, their expenses being defrayed from the municipal purse. This curious method of remunerating the players is one of which we shall furnish numerous instances a little later. It is remarked upon by Fosbroke in his "Encyclopaedia of Antiquities" who quotes an extract from a work entitled "Mount Tabor, or the private exercises of a penitential Sinner, by R. W.," published in 1689. "In the city of Gloucester," says this curious writer, "the manner is (*as I think it is in other like corporations*) that when players of enterludes come to towne, they just attend the Mayor, to enforme him what nobleman's servants they are, and so to get license for their publike playing: and if the Mayor like the actors, or would show respect to their lord or master, he appoints them to play their first play before himself and the Alderman and Common council of the City; and that is called the Mayor's play; where everyone that will, comes in without money, *the Mayor giving the players a reward as he thinks fit to show respect unto them.*" Very different was the spirit in which the municipal authorities received the players of a later date.

Thus, in the Audit of 1532, we find the charges of 13/4, 6/8, etc., money paid to noblemen's companies who during the year had visited Bristol, and charges of a like character continued with ever-increasing frequency through the period of the Tudor dynasty. According to the records of the Corporation of Bristol, the company of the Earl of Sussex, the then Lord Chamberlain, was performing at the Guildhall, between the 29th July, and the 5th of August, 1576. The entry is as follows:—

" Fourth Quarter.
Sixth Weke. Item paid to my Lord Chamberlain's Players, at thend of their Play called *The Red Knight*, before Mr. Mayer and thaldermen in the Yeld Hall, the sume of xx s."

As to the nature of these performances we know scarcely anything. Crude they undoubtedly were, yet an entry made three weeks subsequent to the one already quoted is evidence of their popularity with the citizens :—

" Item pd. for two ryngs of jren to be set vpon the howces of thonside of the Yeldhall dore to rere the dore from the grownd and for mending the cramp of jren wch shuthyth the bar wch cramp was stretched wth the press of people at the play of my Lord Chambleyn's surts in the Yeldhall before Mr. Mayer and thaldermen. . . . . v jd."

It was to this company that Shakespeare became attached about the year 1587, and it is possible that between that date and 1603 he may have visited Bristol with his fellow-comedians. We have no definite assurance of his presence though it is certain that the Lord Chamberlain's company was again performing at Bristol during the month of September, 1597, as is shown in an extract from the chamberlain's accounts for 1596-1597, the twelfth week of the fourth quarter.

" Item, paid unto my L. Chamberlin's plaiers playinge in the Guildehall, xxx. s."

The year between Michaelmas 1577 and Michaelmas 1578 was one of considerable theatrical activity, and it is a matter of additional interest that in every case the entry in the corporate records states the name of the play performed.

" First Quarter :

Third Weke. Item, paid to my Ld. of Leycestre's players at the end of their play, in the Yeldhall, before Mr. Mayer and the Aldermen, and for lyngks to geve light in the evening, the play was called *Myngs*, the sume of xxi. js."

" Fourth Quarter :

Second weke. Item, paid to my Lord Berckley's players, at thend of their play, in the Yeld Hall, before Mr. Mayer and the Aldermen, the matter was *What Mischief Worketh in the Mind of Man.* I say paid theym x. s.

Tenthe weke. Item, paid to my Lord Charles Howard's players at the end of their play, before Mr. Mayer and the Aldermen, in the Yeld Hall, their matter was of the *Q. of Ethiopia*, x. s.

The xi. jth weke. Item, paid to my Lord Sheffield's players, at the end of their play, in the Yeld Hall, before Mr. Mayer and the Aldermen, the play was called *The Court of Comfort*, xii. js, iii. jd."

Detailed information with regard to these plays is lacking. Mr. Tyson, in a note contributed to " Early Treatises on the Stage," suggests that " Myngs," " The Court of Comfort," and " What Mischief Worketh in the Mind of Man," were probably morality plays, but that " The Queen of Ethiopia " was more likely to have been romantic or historical, and there seems to be no ground for differing from his opinion.

Edward Alleyne visited Bristol in 1593 when Lord Strange's company was performing at the Guildhall. Alleyne is reported to have been an accomplished actor. Nash, in his " Pierce Penilesse," speaks of him in super-

latives. "Not Roscius nor Esope, those tragedians admyred before Christ was borne, could ever performe more in action than famous Ned Allen." The actor's presence in Bristol is recorded in a letter written to his wife on August 1st, 1593, in which he says:—"I reseved your Letter at Bristo by richard couley, for the wich I thank you .... if you send any mor Letters, send to me by the carriers of Shrowsbury, or to Westchester, or to York, to be kept till my Lord Stranges players com. and thus sweett hart, with my harty comenda. to all our friends, I sett from Bristo this Wensday after Saynt James his day, being redy to begin the playe of hary of cornwall."

Alleyne was followed some time later by George Peele, the poet and dramatist. Nash is as extravagant in his praise of the author of the "Arraignment of Paris," as he is of the friend of Shakepeare. He calls him "the chief supporter of pleasance now living, the Atlas of poetry, and primus verborum artifex!" However, this may be, Peele, on the occasion of his visit to Bristol, behaved in a shabbily discreditable manner. He was as dissolute as his contemporaries, but the following incident, which he impudently chronicles in the "Merry conceited Jests of George Peele, sometime student of Oxford," proves that he was at the same time dishonest.

Peele having failed to settle his account with the landlord of the inn at which he was staying, the latter, not un-naturally, distrained upon his horse as a mode of enforcing payment. Thus detained, the dramatist was hard put to it to discover a means of escape. It so happened however, that a company of players, lately arrived in the city, had taken up a temporary residence at the same inn, and Peele's nimble wits soon suggested

to him a crafty plan by which he might triumph over his hard-hearted landlord. Accordingly he set out in search of the Mayor, and announcing himself as a "scholar and a gentleman," informed this gullable functionary that he was the author of a play entitled "The Knight of Rodes," the which, he trusted, might find favour in the sight of Mr. Mayor and the worshipful Aldermen of the city. The Mayor, doubtless impressed with Peele's plausibility, expressed regret that he himself would be prevented from attending the performance, but hastened to add that he was none the less willing to accommodate the actors in the Guildhall, and presented the dramatist with "an angel" towards his managerial expenses. Away went Peele to engage the services of the actors, and the play was announced for performance that evening. Forty shillings were collected from an expectant audience. No sooner had the trumpet sounded thrice than, flinging on one of the actors' silken robes, Peele himself appeared before the spectators and delivered the prologue of his play.

> "A trifling joy, a jest of no account, pardie
> The Knight, perhaps you thinke to be I.
> Thinke on so still; for why you know that thought is free
> Sit still awhile, I'll send the actors to yee."

With this promise he vanished not merely from their gaze but also from the theatre, carrying in his pockets the proceeds of the entertainment. With these his horse was speedily redeemed, and, long before either actors or audience were aware of what had taken place, George Peele was safely on the road to London.

At the accession of James 1st, the hey-day of the theatre drew to a close. Puritanism had already begun

to exercise its baneful influence, though it was not yet strong enough to blot the drama entirely from its position as a part of our national existence. In the collection of State Papers for July 1615, is a letter signed by Sir George Buck, Master of the Revels, announcing that His Majesty, at the sollicitation of the Queen, had been pleased to appoint a company of youths to perform plays at Bristol and other towns, under the patronage of Her Majesty, the company to be known as the "Youths of Her Majesty's Royal Chamber of Bristol." To this end a patent was granted to one John Daniel, whose business it was to instruct the children in their professional duties. This, if not the first, is certainly a very early instance of a theatrical company consisting exclusively of juvenile actors. Since that date the freak has many times been attempted, and seldom failed in popularity. At Drury Lane, shortly after the Restoration, there were "some boys who had been bred up under 'The Master Actors.'" Another instance is that of the youthful company of "Liliputians" who appeared in the "Beggar's Opera" at Lincoln's Inn Fields, under the management of John Rich, and the enthusiasm which at one time prevailed for the performances of Master Betty is another example of the craze for the abnormal that from time to time pervades the theatre.

Daniel's patent was transferred by order of the Privy Council in 1618 to three men who were not allowed to remain with their company for more than fourteen days in any one place, and were strictly forbidden to give performances during church hours. Here the prohibitive spirit is clearly discernible. It is the thin end of the wedge. The custom of great nobles possessing private companies of players who visited the provincial towns had prac-

tically ceased to exist. It vanished finally with the death of James. In Bristol, theatrical entertainments became more and more infrequent as time went on, except on the comparatively rare occasions of large fairs, when the entertainments, more often than not, consisted of puppet shows and circus exhibitions. There are instances of the Mayor and Corporation bribing the players to abandon their performances, and others when the luckless players were peremptorily ordered from the city. The hostility to the theatre increased rapidly. At the outbreak of the Civil War the drama and its exponents disappeared entirely from the city, and it was not until the beginning of the next century that they once more succeeded in raising their heads from the obscurity into which they had been plunged. When they did so it was only to enter upon a long and fiercely-contested struggle for existence against the bigoted onslaughts of the church and the antagonism of a large section of the community.

CHAPTER TWO.

PURITANICAL OPPOSITION

CHAPTER TWO.

"The devil a puritan that he is, or any thing constantly but a time-pleaser; an affectioned ass, that cons state without book and utters it by great swarths: the best persuaded of himself, so crammed, as he thinks, with excellencies, that it is his grounds of faith that all that look on him love him."—Shakespeare.

At the Restoration the London actors found themselves in high favour. From the time of their first becoming a distinct and recognised profession they had placed themselves under the patronage of the reigning sovereign and the nobility. When the time came for them to fulfil their obligations they were not slow in coming forward. It will be remembered that during the war, Mohun held a commission of major in the Royalist army; Hart was a captain; Burt, a cornet, while one of the Shotterels became quarter-master in a troop of horse. Quite otherwise was it in Bristol. There, the Puritan conscience continued to exercise a powerful influence. The city had thrown in its lot with Parliament, and it was scarcely to be expected that it would look with encouragement at those who had ranged them-

selves upon the side of the King. There was, as we shall see, little love lost between the actors and the city, dominated as it was by a faction avowedly hostile to the theatre.

Some time after the year 1691 two companies of players appeared at a theatrical booth erected in the Horse-fair, but they were suppressed eight years later, and the sheriffs, who appear to have possessed some financial interest in the venture, were compensated for their loss with a vote of five pounds to be paid them annually from the civic purse.

The close of the seventeenth century, and the opening years of the one following, witnessed an immense change in the popular attitude towards the stage. Close on the heels of license followed re-action. The Miltonic outlook upon life (that is to say, the outlook of Milton, the pamphleteer, not, of course, that of the poet), had already given place to the sparkling inconsequence of Etheridge and Wycherley, and the pendulum having swung from one extreme to the other, the time was ripe for re-adjustment. Hence there arose a fresh standard of values that gave precedence to morality over art, or rather, endeavoured to make morality the touch-stone by which art should be judged, and these values, which have existed almost to the present time, were then embodied in the propaganda of the Society for the Reformation of Manners. It will materially assist the reader to a clearer understanding of the history of the Theatre in Bristol during the next twenty years, if the effects of this change of attitude towards art are briefly stated in their relation to the London stage.

The first blow was levelled against the dramatists by the Rev. Jeremy Collier, in his " Short View of the

Profaneness and Immorality of the English Stage," published in 1698. To this we shall refer again at greater length. Two years later it was the turn of the actors. The Grand Jury of Middlesex made a presentment to the effect that " plays frequently acted at Drury Lane and Lincoln's Inn Fields Theatres are full of profane, irreverent, lewd, indecent, and immoral expressions, and tend to the great displeasure of Almighty God and the corruption of the auditory both in their principles and their practices." This is a matter of importance, for the practice of presenting the actors was a form of procedure resorted to on more than one occasion by the Grand Juries of Bristol. In London, matters went from bad to worse. After a lapse of another two years, a prosecution was instituted in the Court of Queen's Bench against certain of the players at Lincoln's Inn Fields. These, on the direction of the Queen herself, were tried before Chief Justice Holt, and found guilty of " uttering impious, lewd, and immoral expressions." Finally, on January 17th, 1704, Her Majesty, having been pleased to issue her commands for the better regulation of the theatres, expressly forbade the players to act anything " contrary to religion and good manners."

It was in this same year that an actor named Power erected a new theatrical booth in Tucker Street, Bristol Bridge, and brought to the city a company of players. In the following July, we find the Common Council requesting the Mayor and Aldermen that " by regard to the ill-consequences by the introduction of lewdness and debauchery, by the acting of stage plays, players should not be allowed to act within the city." No notice having been paid to this request a presentment was made

by the Grand Jury at the next meeting of Quarter Sessions :—

" The Presentment of the Grand Jury for the City of Bristol. To the Right Worshipful Francis Whitchurch, Esq : Mayor, and the Worshipful Aldermen, her Majesty's Justices of the Peace for the city and county of Bristol, met at the General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, begun and held the 3rd of Oct : Anno Domini 1704, and continued by several adjournments to the 6th day of December, 1704.

We, the Grand Jurors for our Sovereign Lady the Queen (Anne) for the body of the county of this city, do (as in conscience and duty bound) acknowledge the good endeavours that have been used by this Worshipful Bench, for some years past, to discourage immorality and profaneness, by bringing under restraint and endeavouring to suppress those evil methods by which they are promoted and encouraged ; such as MUSIC-HOUSES and other LEWD and DISORDERLY HOUSES, the EXERCISE of UNLAWFUL GAMES, the EXTRAVAGANT NUMBER of ALE-HOUSES, TIPPLING, or IDLY WALKING ON THE LORD'S DAY, PROFANE CURSING AND SWEARING, ACTING OF PLAYS OR INTERLUDES ; which endeavours, tending to God's glory, your zeal and forwardness therein have justly gained you the esteem and honour of all good people of this city and the adjacent counties, to whom you have not only shown a good example, but encouraged to prosecute so good a work. And we are also, with all humble submission, bound to represent the SAD APPREHENSIONS we have of the same evils again breaking in upon us, more than formerly by the increase

of the GREAT NUMBER OF TIPPLING-HOUSES kept by such who, in contempt of justice, sell ale without licence (the Lord's day being much profaned by TIPPLING IN SUCH HOUSES), and also by the great concourse of people in public places, under the pretence of hearing news of that day. But that which puts us more under these SAD APPREHENSIONS is, the late permission given to the PUBLIC STAGE within the liberties of the city, from whence some have conceived the hopes it shall be tolerated always, and countenance (or at least connivance) given to acting of PLAYS AND INTERLUDES within this city and county; which (if it should be) will exceedingly eclipse the good order and government of this city, corrupt and debauch our YOUTH, and utterly ruin many APPRENTICES and SERVANTS, already so UNRULY and LICENTIOUS, that they are with great difficulty kept under any reasonable order or government by their masters. We could wish that these our apprehensions were groundless; but when, in all ages, ACTING OF PLAYS AND INTERLUDES hath been attended with all manner of PROFANENESS, LEWDNESS, MURTHERS, DEBAUCHING and RUINING YOUTH OF BOTH SEXES, infusing PRINCIPLES of IDLENESS and EXTRAVAGANCE into all people who resort to them, We hope your Worships seriously will consider of effectual methods to prevent them, and, with the greatest zeal and fervency, put the same in execution, when it is apparent that all the methods to correct and keep them within modest bounds (which they are tolerated) have proved ineffectual; and all wise men are convinced that there are no methods of hindering or preventing their mischiefs, but by totally suppres-

sing them. Your Worships' task is not so difficult, preventing remedies being more natural and easy than punishing; and we humbly conceive you have reasons more cogent to stir you up to this work, than offer themselves to cities and places where they have been tolerated, abounding with GENTRY and NOBILITY, whose ESTATES and LEISURE render such extravagances more tolerable. But, if in such places their direful and calamitous effects have been so sensibly felt, how much more in a city, not to be upheld but by trade and industry, will they be insupportable. We therefore, do not doubt but all due care will be taken by your Worships to redress and prevent these GRIEVANCES, that a stop may be put to the further progress of IMMORALITY and PROFANENESS, and the work of REFORMATION carried on, so earnestly prest by her Majesty's proclamation, whose pious endeavours God hath so signally owned in the great victories with which he hath blessed her arms, and whose glorious example, we doubt not, but you will follow, to your lasting honour and renown, and the encouragement and comfort of all good citizens.

Walter Chapman, etc."

As a result of this the actors were suppressed, and the theatre in Tucker Street sold to the Presbyterians who converted it into a meeting-house. Some uncertainty exists as to the exact date of the purchase. Mr. Latimer is wholly wide of the mark. He says vaguely that "at some time between the Restoration and the Revolution a theatre was erected on the south side of the Bridge, on ground now occupied by Bath Street, and a company of comedians made its appearance from

time to time. But the immorality of the dramas then popular in London scandalized sober-minded Bristolians, and shortly before the Revolution the play-house was converted into a dissenting chapel."

Mr. Tyson was for a long time unable to satisfy his mind upon this point. He was originally of opinion that the theatre passed into the hands of the Presbyterians in 1704, and the fact that a dissenting minister was domiciled in Tucker Street in the year following lent weight to his conviction. Subsequently however, he changed his mind, and thought that the transfer did not take place until 1706.

Of the two, the earlier date in probably the correct one. Mr. Latimer suggests that in 1705 Power was performing near Stoke's Croft. The fact that when next a company of actors appeared in Bristol they too, set up in that neighbourhood, goes some way to support his theory, and the incontestible presence of the dissenting parson in Tucker Street in that same year is an additional piece of evidence in favour of this view.

Notwithstanding his former treatment, Power returned to Bristol in 1705, and opened the season with a performance of "Timon of Athens." A prologue specially written for the occasion was spoken by Mr. Geo. Powel. Who this particular Powel may have been is a matter for conjecture. Possibly he was the actor to whom Cibber refers at length in his "Apology." If so, it is conceivable that, out-rivalled by Wilks at Drury Lane, and failing to distinguish himself at Lincoln's Inn Fields, Powel may have become a "star" in a provincial company. It is not unlikely that his intemperate habits, which were a bye-word in his profession, had dragged him down to the level of an itinerant comedian.

This particular prologue ran as follows :—

" We therefore your ASSISTANCE must Implore,
Whilst we the HONOUR of the STAGE Restore ;
Our PLAYS from all their Fulsome Rubbish clear,
Bring Banish'd VIRTUE back and fix it here,
If you but smile upon the bold Design,
Once more you'll see the Charming GODDESS Shine.
Here on her Throne She shall a Monarch sit,
Dress'd in the Gay Embellishments of WIT.
And we disclaiming VICE in every Play,
Like Faithful SUBJECTS Her COMMANDS Obey.
No LEWD EXPRESSIONS here shall pass for WIT,
No BLASPHEMY shall fright the trembling PIT,
No MODISH CURSES lard a trifling Scene,
No ROARING HERO SWEAR, and nothing Mean.
To CHUSE such PLAYS shall be our constant Care,
As won't offend the Nicest VESTAL'S EAR.
Such as shall yield both PROFIT and DELIGHT,
Such as you'll see Presented here to Night.
We'll give OFFENCE to neither CHURCH or STATE
Burlesque no TEXT, Buffoon no MAGISTRATE,
Laugh at no LAW : But with such CAUTION move,
We will (if possible) deserve your Love.
So Strictly we'll observe DRAMATICK RULES,
To Lash Designing KNAVES and Banter FOOLS.
Whilst all Brave ACTIONS to Preferment Rise,
And MERIT with APPLAUSE, obtains the PRIZE.
Even COLLIER shall CONFESS we'ave well Begun
The happy CHANGE, and own his BOOKS OUT-DONE."

Whether the promise of amendment made in this Prologue touched the hearts of the authorities, or whether, (as seems more probable) theatrical performances were

once again increasing in popularity, we have no means of ascertaining, but during the season the actors were allowed to appear without molestation. It is not until the following year that we find any evidence of official intervention. When Power returned in the summer of 1706, he entered the city boundaries, and performed, or at any rate attempted to perform, at St. Augustine's Back, on the sight now occupied by what is generally known as Lady Huntingdon's Chapel.

This audacity brought down upon the head of the enterprising manager a storm of disapprobation which he was unable to withstand. The citizens voiced their grievance in a presentment of the Grand Jury on August 10th, 1706.

> " We present MR. POWER, and his company, for acting of PLAYS within the Libreties of this City, without your Worships Leave and Consent.
>
> Isaac Ford, etc."

At the opening of the General Assize of Gaol Delivery which took place five days later, they reiterated their demands with greater insistency.

> " We must not here omit to Declare how much it afflicts our Thoughts, that after so great Obligations to DIVINE BENIGNITY in the late Wonderful Revolution : And in Her Majesty's securing to us, our RELIGIOUS LIBERTIES, and PROPERTIES, then restored : And in Her Pious Zeal to convey these PRIVELEGES to Posterity by Her repeated PROCLAMATIONS against all VICE and IMMORALITY, newly rehearsed to us, that yet the worthy Designs thereof are not effectually attained, not WICKEDNESS so intirely suppressed by the active Endeavours

of our Magistrates, as we could heartily wish. For which end, we would humbly recommend to Your Worships utmost Care and unanimous Zeal, to search out and pursue the most effectual and lawful Methods for crushing the newly erected PLAY-HOUSE, that SCHOOL of DEBAUCHERY and NURSERY of PROFANENESS where VICE and LEWDNESS appear Bare-faced, and Impudent SWEARING notoriously Practised and Recommended: The Danger and Growth of which, we have been seasonably warned against by our Right Reverend the Lord BISHOP, and other Reverend DIVINES from the Pulpit.

Richard Leversedge, etc."

The magistrates, doubtless rendered uneasy in their minds as to what might be the result of this public rebuke, made speed to suppress the players, and for the next twenty years theatrical entertainment was banished from the city.

Certainly the chief, if not the only "other" divine besides the Bishop, who hurled the full force of his eloquence against the luckless players, was the Rev. Arthur Bedford, at that time vicar of Temple Church, and Chaplain to the Duke of Bedford. He subsequently became Chaplain to the Prince of Wales. Convinced that the mantle of Jeremy Collier had descended upon his unworthy shoulders, Bedford started to fulminate against the theatre and all its works. So early as January 7th, 1705, he had flung down the gauntlet in a sermon entitled "Serious Reflections on the Scandalous abuse and effects of the Stage," which he originally delivered at the parish church of St. Nicholas, Bristol, and repeated not long afterwards at St. Botolph's, Aldgate, curiously enough

the birth-place of Edward Alleyne. (1). To these strictures the friends of the drama replied acidly that "they wondered not these hypocrites abhorred the Stage for they saw there only a representation of their own ugly countenances," and that "the stage-glass was not made to flatter Knaves and Fools and therefore such People and their Friends were for breaking the honest Mirrour."

These rejoinders, however, served but to spur the Rev. Bedford to fresh energies. In 1706, the year in which Power and his company were success fully brought to book, he published a very second-rate imitation of Collier's "Short View," which he called "The Evil and Danger of Stage-Plays: Shewing their Natural Tendency to Destroy Religion, and introduce a General Corruption of Manners; in almost Two Thousand Instances, taken from Plays of the two last Years, against all the Methods lately used for Their Reformation," which was printed by William Bonny, then the sole printer carrying on business in the city of Bristol.

The effect of Collier's "Short View" had been deadly. The dramatists attempted more than one rejoinder: their wit scintillated in the theatre; in the pamphlet it lost point and became dull, and their inability to make suitable reply added force to Collier's triumph. Of the intrinsic merits of the book itself, opinion is divided. "There is hardly any book of that time," wrote Macaulay, "from which it would be possible to select specimens of writing so excellent and so varied. To compare Collier with Pascal would indeed be absurd.

(1) The Dictionary of National Biography dates this sermon in 1730. Mr. Tyson is my authority for the statement made above, which on the face of it seems the more probable of the two.

Yet we hardly know where, except in the Provincial Letters, we can find mirth so harmoniously blended with solemnity as in the "Short View." In truth, all the modes of ridicule, from broad fun to polished and antithetical sarcasm, were at Collier's command. On the other hand, he was complete master of the rhetoric of honest indignation. We scarcely know any volume which contains so many bursts of that peculiar eloquence which comes from the heart and goes to the heart. Indeed the spirit of the book is truly heroic."

Against this we may set the opinion of so accomplished a critic as Mr. John Palmer, who, though in no way seeking to minimise the effect produced upon society by the publication of the book itself, rates its performance less highly. "Macaulay," he says in his "Comedy of Manners," "has absurdly exaggerated the merit of Collier's book. It is on the whole well written: occasionally it is witty. But one's total impression of the book is that it is over-long drawn out; that the author has not made the most of an absurdly easy case; that it is superfluously weighted with a clumsy display of ancient learning. Its principle fault is a complete absence of humour. Collier thrusts wittily at his adversaries; but his sense of humour does not rise above academic repartee."

It is worth while noting that in neither case is the effect or the popularity of the book in dispute. Once these had been established, it was not unreasonable to suppose that imitations would follow at no small distance of time. Such indeed was the case, as the very title of Bedford's book shows clearly enough. But if Collier "thrusts wittily" at his opponents, Bedford seeks to stun them with a bludgeon. If there can exist degrees of negativeness, the "Evil and Danger of Stage Plays"

is yet more destitute of humour than the " Short View." There are, it is true, faults common to both, as for example, a tendency to treat the church and morality as synonymous terms, any jesting remarks made in reference to the former or rather to its professors, being regarded as even more heinous than dispagagement of the latter. As Vanburgh remarked with some truth, " 'Twas the quarrel of his (Collier's) gown, not of his God, that made him take up arms against me." Equally we may say of Bedford, as Macaulay said of Collier, that " he was . . . . so injudicious as to place among the outrageous offences which he justly arraigned, some things which are really quite innocent, and some slight instances of levity which, though not perhaps str ctly correct, could easily be paralleled from the works of writers who had rendered great services to morality and religion." But when all is said, Collier's character and attainments were far superior to those of his imitator, and his book is an incomparably better book. It is obviously the work of a scholar, of a man " who had mingled much with polite society," and learned to write with point and urbanity. It should be remembered, too, that Collier was living under a cloud of political disfavour, which might conceivably have gone some way to militate against the success of his work, and it argues a nature of inflexible determination that prompted him, in the face of these difficulties, to carry it to a conclusion. On the other hand, Bedford, smiled on by an influential patron, cradled, so to speak, in the lap of luxury,—he possessed as we have seen more than one sinecure—held every advantage except the culminating one of ability. The parish priest lumbers far in the rear of his prototype, surcharged with self-gratulations, and displaying a malignity which is only too apparent.

The bigot leaps from every page of Bedford's work, and from every argument he adduces against the theatre. That there were abuses needing reform is not to be denied : so, too, we may add, were there in the profession of which the author himself was so militant a partisan, but they were abuses which the church, had it consented to walk with a neck less stiff, might have done much to influence and modify. To rate the sinner tends only to drive him nearer to perdition : You cannot lead a man and at the same time kick him from behind. Yet this is precisely the attitude adopted by Bedford, an attitude which has, unfortunately, found favour and encouragement in the sight of the church even in our own day. Prelates are still prone to rush into print where more tolerant persons fear to tread, and criticise something that few of them have sought to understand. It is scarcely to be wondered at that the players have, from time immemorial, put their thumbs to their noses and retorted with the Countercheck Quarrelsome, " Cucullus non facit monarchum." First cousins, it is true, seldom live in harmony, and when the legitimate garb of the one profession becomes the borrowed trappings of the other, controversy is not unlikely to arise. The reader has here an opportunity of deciding for himself whether or not the actors and dramatists of his day were altogether the double-dyed villains that Bedford would have us suppose.

" I have endeavoured in the following sheets," he writes, " to give a short account of the Profaneness and Immorality of the English stage, in the two last years. . . .:. I have thought myself under some solemn Obligations to set forth these Devices of Satan in their proper Colours." His principle reasons for so doing are

three-fold. First, because as a Christian he has renounced the Devil and all his works, and is therefore compelled to oppose " those places where the Devil is honoured." Second, because as a Minister of God he cannot countenance the encouragement of Atheism, and adds, " I have delivered my own soul."And third, because " the actual Building of a Play-House in this City, and their frequent Actings near it, as well as at the Bath, hath been another Inducement. These Emissaries (*of the Devil*) travel from Place to Place throughout the Land, as if they designed to sow their Tares in every Town, and therefore it is high Time to show the Consequences thereof. The Enemy lay sometime without our Gates, and is now come into the City, in defiance of the Magistrates: And it hath pleased God by His providence to place me herein; so I thought my self as well as others, to be immediately concerned on this Occasion."

Having thus announced the reasons which force the pen into his hand he expresses with the utmost naïvetê his attitude towards plays and players. His statements are not to be questioned; his profession places him above any obligation to furnish proofs. Had he indulged in religious polemics he had been tempted to treat his adversary with fairness; as, however, the stage is his opponent he is under no necessity to observe the ordinary rules of conduct; the circumstances entitle him to dispense with any restraining influence and to say very much what he pleases.

" When I first engaged in this Controversy, the Common Censure was, that I sd more than I could prove. Whether I have proved what I have sd let others judge. I might have given larger Proof, if I had not confined my self to so narrow a Compass. However, I hope, when a

Clergy-Man preacheth against the Play-House, he may be believed, and not be put to the trouble of proving the same by another collection."

"If any reflection I have made seems too severe, I have this Apology: That if the Persons, whom I deal with, were concerned in a Religious Controversy, tho' I had differ'd from them in opinion, yet I should have been obliged to treat them with all possible Tenderness. But as the blasphemous Language of the Play-House raiseth the Blood at the Reading thereof, so it naturally produces more warm Reflections; and when there is not so much as a Pretence of Conscience but the Design is to destroy all Religion whatsoever, in such a Case, an harsh Expression, or an harsher Punishment may be more easily excus'd."

Here is an instance of what Mr. Bedford considers to be the acme of profanity..... "the Actors little regarded the Laws of Man, and at the same Time loudly cry'd to God himself for Judgments in their Plays call'd, The Tempest, and Mackbeth, wherein they presume to imitate the Almighty in his wonderful Acts; wherein they ascribe the Lightnings, Thunder, Storm, and Tempest to the force of Magical Arts, that the Hearers might think them to be no Judgments from God: And thus they mock'd the Great Governor of the World, who alone commands the winds and the seas, and they obey Him. However, God pleaded his own Cause and shew'd us that he would not be thus affronted, by sending a most dreadful Storm on the 26th Day of November, 1703, which fill'd us with Horror and Amazement; wherein he manifested his Anger and his Power, and made us sensible to our Sorrow, that this was his hand, and he did it. And yet so great was the Profaneness

of the Stage under such signal Judgments, that we are told the Actors did in a few days after, entertain again their Audience with these Ridiculous Plays: and that at the mention of the Chimneys being blown down the Audience were pleas'd to Clap at an unusual Length of Pleasure and Approbation."

The reader will learn with amazement that two of the foremost plays in the dramatic literature of this country are "ridiculous," and his opinion of the Rev. Bedford's critical ability will not be enhanced by strictures of this description. But even when he pounces with all his force upon the objective towards which he has all the while been making, he continues to display the same propensity for overstatement.

"When Mr. Power and his Company came to Bristol, he urg'd this Plea, That he would Act nothing, but what shd be sober and modest, etc., and expressed a great Esteem which he had for Mr. Collier's Works, and Design to reform the Stage; and that he only selected the best Plays, and most inoffensive. This was a fine Pretence. But yet he acted near that City, on Monday, July 23rd, 1705, the Comedy, call'd Love for Love; and on Monday the 13th of August following, he acted The Provok'd Wife, he himself (as I was informed) taking the part of Sir John Brute, the Provoking Husband; wh was the most scandalous, profane, and atheistical Part of the whole Play; tho' it is remarkable that both these Plays have been evidently censur'd by Mr. Collier, both in his Short View of the Stage, and Reply in its Vindication, and the Players in Little Lincoln's-Inn-Fields were found guilty in the King's Bench, and fin'd for the Acting of them."

Now, whatever we may think of " The Provoked Wife," though since one of its characters is a clergyman held up to ridicule, it must have been particularly repugnant to Bedford, " Love for Love " is beyond question one of the finest, if not the very finest, comedy of manners which the stage possesses. It was the best comedy written by Congreve who was the best of the Carolinian dramatists. But it was scarcely likely that a divine who read into the event of a passing thunder-storm a judgment from heaven upon a society that tolerated the performance of Macbeth would appreciate the amazing brilliance of William Congreve. Yet, as against this, we find not only Dryden, but also Cibber, that staunch upholder of morality, speaking in terms of genuine admiration of Mr. Congreve, without any suggestion that his works were deservedly censurable.

" When they (the dramatists), speak of the Immortality of the Soul," continues Bedford, " they speak like Atheists ; but when they speak of Enjoyments below, they speak like Devils." In support of his argument he cites the following passages :—

" Who can resolve me what's beyond this Span ?
Perhaps I may return to my first nothing."

and

" So much, so tenderly, your Slave adores,
He hath no Thought of happiness but yours."

Another complaint is that various public officials and professions are openly ridiculed upon the stage. As an instance of this he quotes a line from " An Act at Oxford " :—" I am one of the Grand Jury, and consequently damn'd malicious, and can hang thee right

or wrong." The history of the theatre in Bristol during the years that Bedford was preparing his book is sufficient excuse for the sarcasm, which held the mirror up to nature with a deal of faithfulness. But even when he approaches a subject which might reasonably have called for a just censure, his malignity is such that he over-reaches himself, and spoils the force of his arraignment. A character desires that " for Heaven's sake " care may be taken for the committing of adultery in private, whereupon Bedford remarks, " This is, in short, a Representing of God as delighting in Iniquity, and man as wallowing in Uncleanness under Pretence of Religion."

What effect the publication of this book had upon the community in Bristol we have no means of judging. It is true that in the year of its appearance the actors were suppressed, but the book was not published until after this event, and there is nothing beyond the sermon at St. Nicholas to show that the Rev. Bedford was instrumental in driving them from the city. On the other hand, it is evident that he himself was delighted with the fruits of his labour, for thirteen years later he published an amplified edition, entitled, "A Serious Remonstrance in behalf of the Christian Religion, Against the Horrid Blasphemies and Impieties which are still used in the English Play-Houses, to the Great Dishonour of Almighty God, and in Contempt of the Statutes of this Realm. Shewing their plain Tendency to over-throw all Piety, and advance the Interest and Honour of the Devil in the World; from almost Seven Thousand Instances, taken out of the Plays of the Present Century, and especially of the last five years, in defiance of all Methods hitherto used for their Reformation." Over this second effort there is no occasion to linger.

It must not be forgotten, however, that, though the object of these pamphleteering divines was in the first instance to hit the dramatists, in so doing their shafts fell with very much greater force upon the unfortunate actors. The dramatists were for the most part men of wealth and social position, well able to engage their antagonists upon equal terms, whereas the actors, or at any rate the provincial actors, lived from hand to mouth. If the players were to be proceeded against on account of the comedies they performed, how otherwise, it may be asked, were they to earn a livelihood? Not only were the more licentious dramatists attacked: the fastidious Addison, on account of the fact that his "Cato" dealt with suicide, did not escape condemnation, and Shakespeare and Ben Jonson were considered little more reputable than Wycherley and Congreve.

Happily for the players, the main force of this puritanical opposition to the theatre in Bristol had spent itself and given way to a more enlightened attitude. It needed but another ten years to pass for the time when Hippisley and his company would perform that self-same comedy of "Love for Love," so violently attacked by Bedford, at the opening of the first Bristol theatre, as we now understand the word, beneath the slopes of Brandon Hill.

CHAPTER THREE.

THE JACOB'S WELL THEATRE

CHAPTER THREE.

" Mr. Shepley and I to the new play-house."—Pepy's Diary.

In the year 1726, a fresh company of players from Drury Lane hazarded their fortunes in the city of Bristol with a performance of Addison's " Cato." At that time, and for many years after, the theatrical season extended over the three summer months from June to August, when the London theatres had closed their doors, and left the actors free to establish themselves in the provinces. Two years later the same company re-appeared in the celebrated " Beggar's Opera," which had proved to be the catch of the London season. When Gay showed the manuscript of his play to Congreve, whose experience of dramatic composition had rendered him an acute critic of the theatre, the latter remarked that " it would either take greatly or be damn'd confoundedly." Fortunately for the author, the work met with immediate success, when it was produced by John Rich, at Lincoln's Inn Fields on January the 29th, and ran for sixty-three successive evenings—in those days an almost unprecedented occurrence. If we may judge by the following extract from the Gloucester Journal, June 18th, 1728, the play's popularity was not in any way confined to

its metropolitan audiences, and consequently, as has sometimes been alleged, to what was interpreted to be a political satire.

> "They write from Bath That on Monday last the Princess Amelia attended by the Dutchess of Marlborough, Dutchess of Ancaster, Lady Dalkeith, Countess of Pomfret and many other Persons of Quality *and Mr. Gay* (*the Author*) went to the Theatre there to see the Beggar's Opera perform'd by the Comedians of that City where they were agreeably entertained. We hear also, that the same Comedians perform'd the said Opera at a Person of Quality's House near Bristol on Friday last to a great Number of Persons of Distinction; and that they are now settled at their Great Booth in Bridewell-Lane near St. James' Church Bristol; where they intend to play that Opera every Tuesday and Friday only (unless desir'd) until the Fair, and other Days some other select Play. They have play'd it Twenty times and still the public are as eager to see it as ever."

The character of Peachum in this remarkable opera was originally performed by an actor named John Hippisley or Hyppesley, who, as the leading comedian of this particular company of players, then performing in Bristol, has the distinction of having built the first theatre in that city. In accordance with precedent, he and his fellow-actors were duly presented by a Grand Jury in September of that year, but so great was the popular enthusiasm on behalf of the players, that no active proceedings were taken to prevent the continuance of their performances. The fact is an important one, for it shows that the wave of disapprobation of the theatre had risen to high-water mark and was now fast

receding. To the Rev. Arthur Bedford, who was still living, this must have been a bitter pill to swallow. Still more bitter, as being a direct refutation of his critical judgment, must have been the sight of the following announcement in the London Weekly Journal of June 28th, 1729.

> Bristol June 21. We are now building a very spacious Theatre at Lime Kilns lying convenient for Coaches as well as for the Rope-Walk leading to the Hot-Well. We hear they intend to open on Monday next with the Comedy of Love for Love." (1).

The engagement was fulfilled, and on June 23rd, Hippisley and his company entered their new theatre in Jacob's Well.

The capital requisite for the building of this theatre was subscribed by eighteen persons in shares of £300 each. This sounds an incredibly large sum, but is so stated by Mr; Smith in his " Bristol Theatre." Hippisley undertook its actual construction, and the premises were vested in him in trust for the subscribers, but both he, and subsequently his daughter, Mrs. Green, held them under a lease at £41 per annum. Chatterton held as poor an opinion of the bui'ding as he did of the artistic sensibilities of the Bristol audiences, upon both of which he makes some caustic comments in " The Exhibition."

> " Lost to all learning, elegance and sense,
> Long had this famous city told her pence ;
> AV'RICE sat brooding in a white-wash'd cell,
> And PLEASURE had a *hut* at Jacob's Well."

(1) I am much indebted to Mr. Charles Pearce, Author of " Polly Peachum and the Beggar's Opera," for kindly supplying me with this extract and also with that from the Gloucester Journal.

It must be confessed that the theatre was far from being a commodious structure. "An actor," says Mr. Latimer, "who left the stage on one side and re-entered on the other had to walk round the outside of the house." Adjoining it was an ale-house, called "The Malt Shovel," and by means of a hole made in the party wall, liquor was handed in to the actors as well as to the upper-class spectators, who at that time crowded the stage. The auditorium formed three sides of a square, the stage itself being lighted by candles suspended in semi-circular iron rings from the roof of the ceiling. Servants of the "Quality" were admitted gratis into the upper gallery, a practice first introduced at Drury Lane by Christopher Rich, in the hope, Cibber tells us, that such a proceeding "would not only incline them to give us a good word in the respective families they belonged to, but would naturally incite them to come all hands aloft in the crack of our applauses. And, indeed, it so far succeeded that it often thundered from the full gallery above, when our thin pit and boxes below were in the utmost serenity. This riotous privilege, so craftily given, and which from custom was at last ripened into right, became the most disgraceful nuisance that ever depreciated the theatre." Much the same sort of disturbances arose from the free admittance of footmen to the upper gallery at Jacob's Well. On the first performance of "High Life Below Stairs," these gentlemen, choosing to think the play a satire on themselves, became particularly offensive, and were only with difficulty placated.

The prices of admission were:—Boxes 3s., Pit 2s., Balcony and Pigeon-Holes (seats above the proscenium doors) 1s. 6d., and Gallery 1s. The seating capacity

of the house is reported to have been £80, but from the old account book the average takings, even on a benefit night, do not appear to have been anything approaching that sum. As a matter of some interest we set out at length the first entry to be found in the Account Book of Jacob's Well Theatre, a most interesting volume preserved in the Municipal Library.

Monday, June ye 8th, 1741.

Love's last Shift
and
Dancing. Taken 12 10 0

Musick	0	13	0
Candles	0	11	10
Printer	1	2	0
Dancers	1	1	0
Stage Keeper	0	3	6
Properties	0	5	6
Bill Sticker	0	2	0
Door Keeper	0	2	6
Taylor	0	2	6
Men's Dresser	0	2	6
Women's Dresser	0	2	6
Promptor	0	4	0
Bill Porter	0	2	0
Gallery Keeper	0	1	0
Newman (Taylor)	0	1	0
	4	16	10¼
Remns.	7	13	1¼
18 shares at 8	7	4	0
In hand	0	9	1½

The theatre stood directly beneath the slopes of Brandon Hill and here it was no unusual practice for the citizens to foregather in order to watch the actors entering the playhouse. Mr. Jenkins tells an amusing story of an enthusiastic play-goer who, though in a serious condition of health, could not refrain from attending a performance of her favourite tragedy, " Romeo and Juliet." During the course of the play, which at that time began at five o'clock, the unfortunate lady was seized with the pains of maternity. She succeeded in making her exit from the theatre but was overcome on Brandon Hill, and there, within sight of the theatre, gave birth to a fine boy, whom she subsequently, and with true dramatic feeling, christened Romeo.

The passage from Queen's Square (then the residential quarter of the city), up Rope Walk to the theatre was dark and possibly dangerous. Link boys were in constant demand, but a full moon never failed to cheer the hearts of either actors or audience. Indeed, on benefit nights it was customary to state at the foot of the play-bill that it would be a " moonlight night." One ingenious actor, named Winstone, went so far as to advertise that upon the particular night of his benefit " Madame Cynthia would appear in her utmost splendour." The simple-minded citizens, imagining Madame Cynthia to be some foreign actress of immense reputation who had been specially engaged for that evening's performance, thronged the theatre and breathlessly awaited the entrance of this talented newcomer. When at last their hopes sank and disillusion took the place of expectancy there ensued a hideous up-roar, but the sly player, addressing them from the stage, explained the nature of his ruse, and added that if he had offended he

had done so unwittingly, and could only throw himself upon their indulgence. Thereupon he was forgiven, and no doubt reaped a fruitful harvest as a result of his innocent jest.

Though the members of the company varied from time to time, it remained from first to last a good one. Hippisley himself, it is said, started his theatrical career as a candle-snuffer. He became attached to Rich's company at Lincoln's Inn Fields in 1722, and subsequently went to Drury Lane. As a youth he had been burned upon the cheek, an unhappy incident which, by a stroke of good luck, turned out to be an asset in his business. The scar remained visible all through his life, and added enormously to the comicality of his appearance. Hence it was that Quin, a good friend to Hippisley, when the latter inquired what he should make his son, replied, "Burn his face and make him an *actor*." Davies gives a full account of his abilities. "Hippisley," he says, "was a comedian of lively humour and droll pleasantry, which he often pushed to their full extent; but he would generally stop short when on the brink of excess or offence. He may be rightly termed a sober Shuter, a late actor whose over-flow of comic vivacity often degenerated into buffoonery. At his first appearance he was always received with a loud laugh and a burst of applause. He supported an indifferent comedy of Durfey, now absolutely forgotten, by his incomparable representation of Fumble, a ridiculous old dotard. Corbaccio, in Jonson's "Volpone," can neither see nor hear perfectly. Hippisley's look told the audience that he was a deaf man; for his dim eyes seemed to enquire out the words which were spoken to him. Though he was an actor that generally indulged to the full his power

of exciting laughter, yet he could, at times, be as chaste in his colouring as a critical audience could wish. In Fluellen, the Welsh Captain, in Shakespeare's 'Henry the Fifth,' he represented the choleric spirit and minute oddities of the honest ancient Briton, without the least mixture of trick or buffoonery. Hippisley's Fluellin was the brave officer and gallant soldier, marked with harmless peculiarities. He was a confined actor, but what he did was generally distinguished with marks of genius. His Polonius was such as Shakespeare drew him, a prating, pedantic, busy, obsequious statesman, a fool with a dash of the knave, for the man that is ready to comply with the will of others cannot be honest. His Dogberry was a good picture of ignorant archness and laughable impertinence."

Hippisley was also a dramatist of sorts. He was the author of an opera called "Flora," an adaptation from Cibber's "Hob in the Well," ; of an interlude known as "Hippisley's Drunken Man," from the fact that it was, as its title implies, the soliloquy of an inebriate, and of "A Journey to Bristol, or the Honest Welchman," a farce, which he dedicated to "the Gentlemen of the Principality of Wales, and of the City of Bristol, and all Friends round Ocky-Hole, (1) in the following words :—

"Gentlemen, I shall presume upon your Patience no longer than just to take Notice—That about four Years ago, I introduced a Farce of three Acts on the Stage at Bristol, wherein were two of the same Characters that you will find in this; but I hope much improved: Which, notwithstanding the Badness of the Tale and most of the Characters, was received

(1) Wookey Hole, Somerset, where Hippisley was born.

more favourably than I cou'd have expected—But as the Fable of this in intirely different from that, and the whole new Writ, I would fain flatter myself you will not find it altogether so unworthy of your Pardon—But however that be, I shall take your Perusal of it as a Favour, and submit to your Judgment with the diffidence that becomes,

Gentlemen and Friends,
Your Obliged
Obedient,
Humble Servant.
John Hippisley."

Hippisley died on the 12th of February, 1748, and an advertisement in the Bristol Oracle of the following October, announces the sale of his household and personal effects :—

" To be sold by Auction, or otherwise, on Tuesday the 18th of this Inst : October, 1748, The Household Goods, Linen, and Plate, of the late Mr. Hippisley, deceas'd, at his Dwelling House near the Play-House at Jacob's Well. The Sale to begin at Nine o'clock in the morning, and continue till all are sold.

N.B. There is a very good large Spinnet, almost as good as new, and many other curious Things."

The celebrated Macklin was for long connected with the Bristol stage. The Biographia Dramatica states that he first came to the city in 1716. Kirkman, however, tells us that this did not happen until " he had completed his twenty-sixth year," and since Macklin was probably born in 1697, it is more likely that he did not arrive in Bristol until 1723. " It happened at this period," says Kirkman, " that a company of inferior

strolling players arrived at Bristol, and opened a small theatre there,"—Macklin being amongst the number. " At the end of four years from his last leaving Bristol, he returned to it," and appeared as Friar Tuck in " Romeo and Juliet," and on the next evening as Mercutio as well.

In February, 1741, Macklin appeared at Drury Lane in the character of Shylock. Up till that date the part had invariably been played in the tradition that it was a comic one. Macklin grasped the " true intent " of Shakespeare and invested the character with a serious dramatic interest. His performance called forth from Pope the well-known eulogy,

" This *is* the Jew
That Shakespeare drew ! "

In the same year Macklin joined the company at Bristol and presented the character that had rendered him famous on June 29th, July 1st, July 6th, and finally on the evening of his benefit, the 24th of August, when the takings of the house amounted to £31. On this occasion he was accompanied by his wife, whose benefit took place on August 3rd, when she secured a record house of £52. This was probably due in some measure to the attractiveness of the play which was none other than the ever-popular " Beggar's Opera."

Mr. Jenkins records an anecdote with reference to one of Macklin's visits to Bristol, when we may assume that his wife was not present. " While he was at Bristol he paid great attention to the daughter of a gentleman who lived near Jacob's Well, and, after much solicitation, a night was appointed to receive him, and one of the windows of the parlour left unbolted for the purpose

of his getting into the house. Unfortunately for Macklin, he had to play Hamlet and Harlequin that night, which made it late. On his setting out, too, he was overtaken by a very heavy shower of rain, which almost drenched him to the skin; and, to make matters still worse, just as he had raised the sash of the window, in stepping in, he happened to overset a large china jar of water, which made such a noise as to alarm the family. The young lady, however, who best judged the cause of it, was the first to run down to see what was the matter; when she advised her lover to make the best way out of the house, in order to save his reputation as well as her own. Macklin obeyed; and the lady felt her escape so sensibly, that reflection got the better of her love, and she never afterwards spoke to him."

Macklin was undoubtedly a powerful actor, though Churchill finds plenty of ill-natured things to say of him in the "Rosciad."

> "Macklin, who largely deals in half-form'd sounds,
> Who wantonly transgresses Nature's bounds,
> Whose acting's hard, affected, and constrain'd,
> Whose features, as each other they disdain'd,
> At variance set, inflexible and coarse,
> Ne'er know the workings of united force."

Woodward was another much-valued member of the company at Jacob's Well. He was born in 1717, at London, and educated at the Merchant Taylor's School. Like Hippisley's, his reputation is closely connected with the "Beggar's Opera," for he became a member of Rich's "Liliputians" at the age of either fourteen or fifteen, and performed the character of Peachum with considerable success. Genest, in his "History of the

Stage," has a reference to this particular episode :— " If I am not very greatly mistaken I, many years ago, saw an edition of ' The Beggar's Opera,' as acted by children with Woodward's name to one of the characters." The parts which in later life Woodward made peculiarly his own were those of Mercutio, Bobadil, Marplot, and the Copper Captain in " Rule a Wife," in which he succeeded where Garrick met with failure. He was also the original Captain Absolute.

Thomas King is chiefly remembered as being the first Sir Peter Teazle to Mrs. Abingdon's Lady Teazle. Sheridan was dissatisfied with his conception of the part, though other contemporaries speak of it as an " un-equalled performance." Boaden gives an excellent description of his talents.

> " King, though very confined in his powers, was one of the most perfect actors. His peculiar sententious manner, made him seek, and indeed require, dialogue of the greatest point. He converted everything into epigram, and although no man's utterance was more rapid, yet the *ictus* fell so smartly upon the point, his time was so perfect, and the members of his sentences were so well antagonised, that he spoke all such composition with more effect than any man of his time. He was at home in the arch and impudent valet who shares his master's imperfections with his confidence, and governs him by his utility..... Nothing approached him in the dry and timid habitual bachelor, drawn into the desperate union with youth, and beauty, and gaiety."

Hazlitt's criticism is more familiar :—

> " His acting left a taste on the palate sharp and sweet like a quince. With an old, hard, rough, withered

face, like a sour apple, puckered up into a thousand wrinkles; with shrewd hints and tart replies; with nods and becks and wreathed smiles; he was the real amorous, wheedling, or hasty, choleric, peremptory old gentleman in Sir Peter Teazle and Sir Anthony Absolute, and the true, that is, pretended clown in Touchstone, with wit sprouting from his head like a pair of asses ears, and folly perched on his cap like the horned owl . . . ."

King began his theatrical career in 1747, at seventeen years of age, when, in company with Ned Shuter, he became a strolling player among the Kentish barns. He subsequently removed with the rest of the company at Jacob's Well to the theatre in King Street, and eventually became one of its managers, retiring in 1802.

Of all these actors, however, the one who crept closest into the affections of the citizens of Bristol was William Powell, who made his first appearance as King Lear in August, 1764. His history is therefore, more properly connected with the Theatre Royal, but since he was also of the company at Jacob's Well during the last years of that theatre's prosperity, the narrative of his successes will not be entirely misplaced if included in this chapter.

In September of the previous year, Garrick, who had sustained a temporary lapse from popularity, left England with his wife, and set out upon the Grand Tour. Colman remained in charge at Drury Lane, and Garrick's principal parts were placed in the hands of a young pupil, William Powell, who had originally been a clerk in the counting-house of Sir Robert Ladbrooke, the great banker. Garrick had discovered Powell's abilities when the latter was still an amateur at the Wood Street

Debating Club in Temple Bar, and had encouraged the young man to throw up his position in the city for a career upon the boards. "He did not dream," says Mr. Fitzgerald, "that the terrible cry of 'A Rival!' would be raised." In Garrick's absence, however, Powell succeeded in carrying all before him. He appeared first as Philaster, upon which occasion Colman, by way of introducing the young actor to the public, contributed a prologue of historic interest.

"Thus of our Bards, we boldly speak our mind,
A harder task, alas, remains behind,
To-night, as yet by public eye unseen,
A raw unpractised Novice fills the scene,
Bred in the City, his theatric star
Brings him at length on this side Temple Bar,
Smit with the Muses, the ledger he forgot,
And when he wrote his name he made a blot,
Him whilst perplexing hopes and fears embarrass
Skulking (like Hamlet's rat) behind the Arras,
Me, a dramatic fellow feeling draws
Without a fee—to plead a brother's cause.
Genius is rare, and whilst our great Comptroller
No more a Manager, 's turned an errant stroller,
Let new Adventurers your care engage
And nurse the infant saplings of the stage."

From Philaster, Powell proceeded to Cymbeline, always with complete success. "Tall, thin, as he was," continues Mr. Fitzgerald, "He was quite of the Barry order: and his voice in tragedy went to all hearts, and drew abundant tears. The pit stood up, and shouted, in spite of Foote, who sat in the boxes on the first night, and affected to jeer at the whole..... He (Powell) then applied himself to study hastily, and produce in

succession, a whole round of characters of which he knew nothing. It made no difference—the crowds came—it was the fashion to go and hear Mr. Powell, and there were even plenty to say, that *here was Mr. Garrick's successor*, and that the loss of that great actor was more than repaired. There were plenty, too, to let him know of this good news. Now Lacy, with an almost spiteful congratulation, recorded as spitefully by Davies, bade him by no means abridge his tour, but enjoy himself as long as possible away, ' for the house was always crammed, and not even Mr. Garrick's own most principal parts had brought more money.' "

Mr. Fitzgerald is a little unfair to Davies who gives a restrained and well-balanced appreciation of Powell's talent. " Powell was an enthusiast in acting; he loved the practice of his profession to that extent, that he cared not what number of parts, however different from each other, he was called upon to represent. To the surprise of everybody, he acquitted himself handsomely, though not equally, in every character which he attempted. Had he restrained his impetuosity, he certainly might have been twice the actor he was."

Garrick, hearing of his under-study's repeated successes, grew uneasy in his mind, though he cannot have suspected any real danger to his own established reputation. Accordingly, on December the 12th, 1764, we find him writing to Powell from Paris, that the news of his triumph had given him " a very sensible pleasure." Powell had expressed his gratitude to the elder actor for the assistance afforded him, to which Garrick replies that his so doing " has attached me to you as a man who shall always have my best wishes for his welfare,

and my best endeavours to promote it .... Give to study," he continues, "and an accurate consideration of your characters, those hours which young men too generally give to their friends and flatterers .... When the public has marked you for a favourite (and their favour must be purchased with sweat and labour), you may choose what company you please, and none but the best can be of service to you .... Study hard, my friend, for seven years, and you may play for the rest of your life..... Never let your Shakespeare be out of your hands; keep him about you as a charm; the more you read him, the more you will like him, and the better you will act him..... Guard against splitting the ears of the groundlings—Do not sacrifice your taste and feelings to the applause of the multitude; a true genius will convert an audience to his manner, rather than be converted by them to what is false and unnatural." Excellent advice, which Powell was either too indolent or too impetuous to follow!

On his return to England, Garrick's tone of patronage changed to one of open hostility. Powell went over to Covent Garden with Colman, and acquired an interest in the management of the theatre, whereupon Garrick said that he was a "scoundrel," and that Colman would soon repent of having accompanied him. The result proved contrary to Garrick's expectation. Colman remained fast friends with the young actor until the latter's death a few years later. That Powell stood by his benefactor in foul as well as in fair weather is shown by the following notice, issued at a moment when Colman and himself, on the one hand, were divided against the rest of the management on the other, and there had been some disturbance in the theatre.

"Gentleman,

Great part of our boxes being taken for the play of 'Cymbeline,' great danger must accrue to my property by your method of proceeding, and I must appeal to my friends and the public for redress. I most sincerely concur with Mr. Colman's sentiments above, and shall abide by his determination.

I am, your humble Servant,
W. Powell."

As in London, so in Bristol. Powell's success was immediate and complete. "A theatrical mania," says Mr. Jenkins, "began to rage in Bristol. Powell was the chief subject of conversation at our coffee-houses, taverns, and tea-tables, and anyone who had not seen and applauded his performances, must (like Lady Teazle) never have pretended to any taste again."

Five years after his first appearance in Bristol, Powell caught a fever from lying naked on the grass after a game of cricket, and to this he shortly afterwards succumbed. On Friday the 30th of June, 1769, a notice was issued by the management of the King Street Theatre suspending their usual performances.

"Mr. Powell lying it is feared at the Point of Death, and as the keeping him quiet at this Period is of the utmost consequence to him, It is humbly hoped the Humanity of the Publick will excuse the Managers coupling with The Request of his distress'd Family and Physicians, To defer Acting till Monday as Mr. Powell's Lodging is next door to the Theatre."

He died three days later, in the arms of Hannah More. It is related that, during the same evening, Holland, who for years had been deeply attached to the

dying actor, was playing in Richard III., and had just finished the lines "All of us have cause to wail the dimming of our shining star," when Powell's decease was announced. Holland was so overcome with emotion that he was unable to continue playing, and in an effort to address the audience, burst into uncontrollable tears.

On the following Thursday his remains were carried to the Cathedral, attended by Colman as chief mourner, the principal actors from the theatre, and a large concourse of citizens. They were met by the Dean of Bristol and the choir at the end of College Green, and from thence proceeded to the place of burial. The service was, however, marred by an untoward incident,—the appearance of Ned Shuter, dressed, like Théophile Gautier, in a scarlet waistcoat, and evidently the worse for drink, who hammered loudly with his stick upon the church door, crying out, to the horror of those who heard him, the well-known lines from "Romeo and Juliet":—

> "Thou detestable maw, thou womb of death,
> Gorg'd with the dearest morsel of the earth,
> Thus I enforce thy rotten jaws to open,
> And in despite, I'll cram thee with more food!"

A mural tablet was erected in the Cathedral to Powell's memory, for which Colman composed a touching epitaph.

> "Bristol! to worth and genius ever just,
> To thee our Powell's dear remains we trust;
> Soft as the stream thy sacred springs impart,
> The milk of human kindness warm'd his heart:
> That heart, which every tender feeling knew,
> That soil, where pity, love, and friendship grew!

Oh ! let a faithful friend, with grief sincere,
Inscribe his tomb and drop the heartfelt tear ;
Here best his praise, here found his noblest fame—
All else a bubble, or an empty name ! "

The actresses of Jacob's Well were much inferior to the actors. Mrs. Pritchard was the first leading lady, whom Johnson called " an inspired idiot," and to whom Churchill makes an ill-natured reference in the " Rosciad." She established her reputation originally at Drury Lane in the character of Rosalind, and is said to have raised the Queen in Hamlet " to a grandeur and importance such as no other had ever given it." She retired from the stage in 1768, after thirty-six years of unremitting labour, appearing for the last time as Lady Macbeth to Garrick's Macbeth, the last time that he, too, ever appeared in that tragedy. She died at Bath in the same year, an occurrence which is reported with cynical bitterness in a letter from Gainsborough to Garrick. " Poor Mrs. Pritchard died here on Saturday night, at eleven o'clock : so now her performance being no longer present to them, who must see and hear before they can believe, you will know, my dear sir—but I beg pardon, I forgot—Time puts all in his fob, as I do my timekeeper—watch that, my dear .... "

Her daughter, Miss Pritchard, was the original Fanny in " The Clandestine Marriage." She was a friend of Hannah More, who addressed to her an acrostic in reference to a supposed courtship between the young actress and Fleetwood, the son of a former patentee at Drury Lane, who at that time was a member of Hippisley's company.

" P rudence, a virtue banish'd from the age,
R arely or never met with on the stage,
I oined to a form more exquisitiely fair
T han Venus when to Mars she did appear,
C harmed the rude God, and smooth'd the face of war,
H er fate, O Heav'n ! be thy peculiar care,
A nd take her Fleetwood, worthy of the fair ;
R ender them happy in each other's bliss,
D eserve, enjoy, supremest happiness ! "

Miss Hallam was the daughter of William Hallam, related to Rich, and at one time manager of the theatre in Goodman's Fields. This was the Hallam so untowardly killed by Macklin in a quarrel that took place in the green-room at Drury Lane, when Macklin in a fit of rage, drove his stick into the other's eye and caused his death. Miss Hallam afterwards married Mattacks, the Covent Garden actor, who also appeared at Jacob's Well. Boaden relates that " in her private manners she was rather refined, and had some of the graceful ease of the old school. On the stage she had a taste for the greatest breadth of effect, and excited probably as much laughter as Lewis himself. She was the patent representative of all widows of distinction, whether they were discriminated by valuable or mischievous properties. Nor were her chambermaids without the usual dexterity of the class."

Of Mrs. Green, Hippisley's daughter, we know practically nothing. Mr. Smith on two occasions states that she was the only woman ever seduced by Garrick, but there is no further evidence in support of this. After her father's death, Mrs. Green continued to lease the theatre at Jacob's Well, and in later years removed to King Street with the remainder of the company.

THE JACOB'S WELL THEATRE

In 1766 there was a general exodus of the actors to the new theatre in King Street. From thence onwards Jacob's Well ceased to be a place of fashionable resort. The last performance given in the building was of a pantomime in 1779, and its fate is mourned in some anonymous verses to be found in Mr. Jenkins's " Memoirs" from which we quote the following lines.—

" Close to where Brandon's heights majestic rise,
Your once fam'd theatre in ruin lies ;

There bright Thalia, mirth-inspiring maid
Taught vanished Bristol ev'en to slight her trade !

But all those charms are fled, no perfum'd beau
There, in green box, shall lounge an hour or so ;
No thin, wan maid, from Clifton or the Wells,
Wrapt in the drama, there her grief dispels ;

By Time, rude leveller of small and great,
TROY'S TOWERS and JACOB'S WELL have shared one fate ! "

CHAPTER FOUR.

THE THEATRE ROYAL

CHAPTER FOUR

" The Drama's laws the Drama's patrons give."
—Johnson.

Locality is always a determining factor in the fortunes of the theatre. When Betterton headed the revolt from Drury Lane he found himself seriously handicapped in removing so far from the home of fashion as the tennis court in Lincoln's Inn Fields. In likewise, locality determined the site of the new Bristol theatre. People had long felt the need of a playhouse less distant than Jacob's Well from their own place of residence. " It ought to be remembered," writes Mr. Jenkins " that Queen-Square and Prince's Street (as the appearance of the houses bear ample testimony) at that time contained abundance of opulence and of fashion; in fact they had no rivals but College-Green and its neighbourhood. Park-Street was then only creeping into existence, Berkley-Square not even dreamed of, and Clifton itself was a poor village consisting only of a few straggling houses." Accordingly, on October 25th, 1764, a meeting of citizens was convened to elect the site of a new theatre. The prime movers of the enterprise were Mr. Thomas Symons, a solicitor, and Mr. Alexander Edgar who served

as Sherriff in 1767, and as Mayor twenty years later. The contract for the King Street premises had already been approved when a fresh site was offered on the Boar's Head Yard in Lime-kiln Lane. and no doubt this latter would have proved eventually a more satisfactory locality, but with due regard to commercial probity it was decided " That as the contract was made for the premises in King Street, they (the members of the Executive committee) could not be off with their bargain."

Mr. Symons and his colleague were not the persons to do things by halves or to let the grass grow under their feet. No sooner had the site of the new building been agreed upon than they journeyed to London, made a careful inspection of the metropolitan theatres, and returning, brought with them " a ground-plan, elevation, and section of Drury-Lane house ; to procure which, they consulted and employed ' the ingenious carpenter, Mr. Saunders, of that house.' " The foundation stone was laid on November 30th, 1764, and in eighteen months the building was completed at a cost of £5,000. A contemporary remarks with some humour that " about this time there were three undertakings of consequence begun in the parish of St. Nicholas and the close adjoining ; viz., a Theatre, a Bridge, and a Church ; the Theatre was finished first, the Bridge next, and the Church last."

Still, the enterprise was not one calculated to pass without opposition. Bedford, it is true, had long been gathered to his fathers, but there remained plenty of the same kidney to hinder and harrass the seekers after false gods, and though they no longer carried with them the majority of the town, these controllers of the public

morality continued for many years to carry on an active campaign of aggression, until the mark of royal favour extended (for a consideration) to the Playhouse, finally silenced their jeremiads.

Scarcely had the proposal for building a new theatre been mooted than there appeared in Felix Farley's Bristol Journal a strong protest against its erection.

Bristol, December 4th, 1764.

" It has been ever looked upon as a prudent measure, to recur to the wisdom of our ancestors for direction in civil matters, where any difficulty should arise with respect to our conduct, especially in all offices of public concern. A case of that nature at this time occurs, viz.: the erecting *a large Playing-house* in the heart of the city, cognisable doubtless, by a Grand Jury and Court of Aldermen: a city whose honour and credit, whose interest and trade, can alone be supported by strictly observing the motto of its arms, Virtute et Industria, *by Virtue and Industry.*—I would therefore earnestly recommend the following Presentment of a Bristol Grand Jury in the year 1704, to the serious consideration of my fellow-citizens; in which they may see not only the piety, but the wisdom and good sense of their fathers; some of whose sons may perhaps be even now living, but it is hoped will not be found to be among those who, so much addicted to pleasures and dissipation, now think of little else but *gratifying* them to the full, even at the risk of ruining the morals of our youth, impoverishing our tradesmen and artisans, promoting the arts of intrigues and of seducing the innocent, reducing many perhaps to bankruptcy, injuring the credit

of others and diffusing an habit of idleness, indolence, and debauchery throughout this once *industrious and virtuous city*, whose glory, we here may see, it formerly was to act up to the motto of its arms, which it will be vain to boast of *when* it will be so much abused and contradicted by our actions; in vain is also the Beehive, the Seal of the Corporation for the poor, as a sign of our industry, while places shall be erected in this city on purpose to encourage idleness and lead to vice and squandering; in vain is the motto of the Merchants' Arms, 'Not inur'd to suffer Poverty,' *indocilis paupersem pati*, if they erect and frequent those places which have a natural tendency to bring themselves and dependents to it.

A Fellow Citizen."

The presentment mentioned above, and to which we referred in an earlier chapter, is then set out at length.

In the following year there was issued an anonymous tract entitled "The Consequences of a New Theatre to the City of Bristol, considered with some Interesting Thoughts on the Subject of Plays in General humbly submitted to the Consideration of the Wiser and more serious Part of the Inhabitants of the said City," wherein the arguments used run along much the same lines as those employed at an earlier date by Bedford. But just as Bedford was considerably the inferior of Collier both in style and power of expression, so the writer of this pamphlet is, in his turn, inferior to Bedford. His bias is so unmistakeable as to be ludicrous. "Of how much more destructive a Tendency," he cries, "are the Flames communicated to us from a Play-house, than those which consume a Dwelling, demolish an entire Street, or lay

even a whole City in Ashes!—Time and Benefactions may restore these to their former Beauty, while the Danger we sustain from the other, renders our Condition *almost* irreparable." The glorious example of the treatment meted out to the theatrical profession by his forefathers is ever present to the writer's mind. "Our worthy Ancestors .... about sixty years since ..... made a noble Stand against a New Play-House then erected in this City. It was therefore earnestly recommended to the Magistrates seriously to consider the most effectual Methods for their Prevention: and none other could be thought so effectual as a total Suppression of them." In his view theatres are "Places where *Heathen* Deities are adored; the Scriptures burlesqued and ridiculed; Whoredom and Adultery pleaded for in the most artful Terms: Where sometimes are to be heard Things that have either an immediate Tendency to promote *Atheism*, or to render *revealed Religion* a Matter of Contempt! And shall the Establishment of such a Place as this be openly encouraged and defended by us?" though it is worth while noticing that in a sentence just previous to this outburst the writer declares that the "Sanctity" of those who profess themselves Christians "forbids them to frequent places erected to the Honour of its declared Enemy!"

The writer next proceeds to particularise his objections: the appearance of an actress "habited in Man's Apparel," which is a gross contravention of the xxiii. 5 Deuteronomy; the blasphemous use of Gad for God, and Lard for Lord; the teaching of men to "sport with Damnation" in Othello's "Perdition catch my soul!" and the frightful expressions used to women such as:

" Do I accept her ?
With greater Rapture than the Wretch that's freed
From Death's convulsive Pangs embraceth Heav'n."
—" You have fix'd me your's, to the last Existence
of my soul's eternal Entity."

And speaking of another man's wife,

" Tell her I am all her's ;—tell her my Body is her's ;—tell her my Soul is her's ;—and tell her my Estate is her's."

These, being the wickednesses of the playhouse, " to be *passive* on the Occasion is, insensibly, to desert the most glorious Cause in the World ; *The Cause of God, and of Virtue* :—It is tacitly to consent to the Introduction of the *Means* for your Children's Ruin." The conclusion, as might be expected, calls upon the magistrates to suppress the new building.

It is obvious that the author of this anonymous tract was intimately acquainted with Bedford's earlier protests against the stage, for " The Consequences of a New Theatre " is in substance nothing better than a re-dressing of " The Evil and Danger of Stage Plays." Its single merit is its comparative brevity. Both works are similar in treatment ; the same plays are condemned, the same pernicious extracts cited, and it is worth while recording the fact that after a lapse of sixty years the opponents of the theatre had discovered no fresh arguments with which to consolidate the justice of their cause.

In spite of opposition, however, the theatre continued to grow more and more visibly into existence, and the nature of the premises are minutely described in the Regulations of the Trust deed, certain particulars of which are here set out.

"The property of the Bristol Theatre consists of a freehold theatre or playhouse in King Street, subject to a ground-rent of £22 per annum, a leasehold messuage fronting King Street, held under the Corporation for 99 years, determinable with 3 lives, at a yearly rent of £2; a leasehold messuage in the Rackay (1) (forming a back entrance) held for 99 years absolutely, under a yearly rent of £5; and freehold messuage adjoining the last mentioned premises. This property is vested in 5 trustees for the proprietors, the whole number of shares being 48."

The capital required for the building was forthcoming in forty-eight shares of £50 each, besides an extra £1400 subscribed by various patrons of the drama, and a later advance of £1,000, which together brought the total nearly up to £5,000 originally expended.

Each shareholder was entitled to a silver ticket admitting him without further charge to every entertainment, a course which was no doubt suggested by that employed at the Haymarket, and described by Cibber. "A new project was form'd, of building them a stately theatre, in the Hay-Market, by Sir John Vanburgh, for which he raised a subscription of thirty persons of quality, at one hundred pounds each, in consideration whereof every subscriber, for his own life, was to be admitted to whatever entertainment should be publickly perform'd there, without farther payment for his entrance." Besides the silver tickets, two gold ones, in recognition of exceptional services, were issued to "Edward Crump and Anna his wife to

(1) Rackay, formerly a yard for the racking or stretching of cloth. It became freehold in 1815, at a cost of £230.

them and their heirs for ever." What was the ultimate fate of the gold tickets we do not know, but a number of silver ones, together with several forgeries, are still in circulation. Some difficulty in the matter must have arisen almost immediately, for in the Bristol Gazette of September 15th, 1791, we find an advertisement requesting the holders of " Admissable Tickets " to send their names, and the number of such ticket, to the treasurer " at his tea-shop, near St. Stephen's Church," for the purpose of having them registered in the office of the theatre. But the problem was not to be so easily solved. A letter issued from the Under Sheriff's Office as late as 1900 shows to some extent the confusion still existing. We quote the following extract, which tells us incidentally, that the ticket in question was spurious :

" The question about your Silver Ticket is beset with difficulties. In the first place—The number has never been filled in—and it is dated 30th May, 1766—more than a year before the date of the Deed by which the rights of free Admission were constituted.

" The Trust Deed in question is dated 26th August, 1767, and provides for the issue, in the future, of two distinct sets of Tickets as evidence of the rights of free Admission—namely, Fifty tickets for each of the original fifty (!) subscribers, each ticket being known as a " Proprietor's ticket, and being numbered for the purpose of identification, and of annual registration with the Lessee, in the name of the person for the time being entitled to use it—and two extra tickets, for a Mr. and Mrs. Crump, who were not subscribers or Proprietors, but who had helped to procure the site of the Theatre.—These two lastly

mentioned tickets, not being subject to registration with the Lessee, bore no number we believe and were also we believe " Bearer " tickets.....

" The first time Silver Tickets are mentioned in the minutes of the proceedings of the Proprietors is on the 1st of August 1799, and so long ago as 1857, it had been found that great irregularities prevailed, and that more persons obtained admission to theTheatre by means of Silver Tickets, than those who were entitled to free admission."

The " Irregularities," as we have seen, had prevailed for a considerably longer period !

The architect of the theatre was a Mr. James Paty, and the interior, planned by Saunders of Drury Lane celebrity, was executed by a local artist, Mr. Michael Edkins. The auditorium, unlike the one at Jacob's Well, was built in the form of a semi-circle, said to have been the first in England, and was lavishly decorated with carving and gilt. There were two tiers of boxes, and over the door of each was inscribed the name of a dramatist. The nine lower or " dress " boxes were distinguished by the names of Shakespeare, in the centre, Jonson, Vanburgh, Rowe and Steele on the right hand, and on the left those of Fletcher, Congreve, Otway and Cibber. In the same way the eight upper boxes were decorated with the names of Garrick, Wycherley, Addison, Farquhar, Dryden, Lee, Shadwell, and Colman.

The house was designed to accommodate 750 persons in the Boxes, 320 in the Pit, and 530 in the Gallery, making a total of 1600. A full house would have brought a return of something like £229 15s. 0d.

Mr. Smith gives an interesting account of the manner in which play-going was regarded in those days. " My own father never thought of going to ' the boxes ' at the Play without first sending to Ellis and Selway in Broad Street for a man to ' dress his hair,' and as to appearing in leather breeches and boots, no one ever dreamed that such a custom would be allowed to disgrace ' the boxes.'—The females, too, about the (year) 179-3-4-5 wore enormously great hats—more like a chinese boat-man's, than anything else—these were also prohibited—indeed the Stage would have been shut out to all on the third bench—it was quite bad enough to be obliged to catch a view by the side of a lady's enormous head of hair—reaching nearly two feet above the forehead, and filled with quantities of artificial flowers and even the resemblances of fruits and common vegetables."

The general meeting of the Proprietors was held on May 29th, 1766, and the theatre opened on the following evening under the management of Powell, Holland and Clarke, (1) who held it on a lease for seven years at a rent of £200 per annum, and not £300, as has been sometimes stated. " When the whole was illuminated," says a contemporary, " there appeared one of the finest scenes Imagination can conceive ; the rich paintings, together with the brilliancy of the ladies, formed so complete a view that Malice herself, had she been there, must (for that night at least), have put on a smile of approbation." The first performance was that of Steele's " The Conscious Lovers," followed by the farce of " The Miller of Mansfield." The prices of admission to the

(1) These are the names in the minutes of the Proprietors, though Holland's, curiously enough, does not appear in the list of the company for the year 1766 in Mr. Jenkin's " Memoirs."

boxes had been raised from 3s. 6d. to 4s., though the pit and gallery remained open at the normal charges of 2s. 6d. and eighteen pence respectively. Garrick, who pronounced the theatre to be "the most complete of its dimensions in Europe," contributed a Prologue which was spoken by Powell, and an Epilogue, spoken by Arthur. The quality of his verses is contemptible, but it is, perhaps, worth while quoting them in extenso, since they were pronounced upon this historic occasion.

PROLOGUE.

"Before you, see one of your stage-directors,
Or, if you please, one of those strange projectors
Whose heated brain, in fatal magic bound,
Seeks for that stone which never can be found.
But in projection comes the dreadful stroke,
The glasses burst, and all is bounce and smoke!
Though doubtful still our fate—I bite my thumbs,
And my heart fails me,—when projection comes:
Your smiles would chase our fears; still I could dream,
Rich as a Nabob, with my golden scheme!
That all the world's a stage, you can't deny;
And what's our stage? a shop—I'll tell you why—
You are the customers, the tradesmen we;
And well for us, you pay before you see;
We give no trust, a ready-money trade;
Should you stop payment, we are bankrupts made.
To feast your minds, and sooth each worldly care,
We'll largely traffic in dramatic ware,
Then swell our shop, a warehouse to your eyes,
And we, from small retailers, merchants rise!
From SHAKESPEARE'S golden mine we'll fetch the ore,

And land his riches on this happy shore !
For we, theatric merchants, never quit
This boundless store of universal wit.
But we in vain shall richly laden come,
Unless deep water brings us safely home ;
Unless your favour in full tides will flow,
Ship, crew, and cargo to the bottom go !
Indulge us, then, and from our hearts receive
Our warmest wishes—all we have to give.
May honoured commerce, with her sails unfurl'd,
Still bring you treasures from each distant world ;
From East and West extend this city's name,
Still to her sons increasing wealth with fame ;
And may this merit be our honest boast,—
To give you pleasure, and no virtue lost."

EPILOGUE.

" In days of yore, it was a constant rule,
That every knight should have his 'squire and fool :
When forth the hero went, they followed after,
One bore his shield, the other rais'd his laughter :
The Stage should have them all ; but prudent, we
Join 'squire and fool in one, and I am he !
Our hero in the prologue took his rank,
Don Quixote he, and I his Sancho Panc.
If ours should prove a windmill scheme, alas !
I know, and I will tell you what will pass !
We all—each son of THESPIS, and each daughter,
Must for sweet *Bristol Milk* drink *Bristol Water* ;
Which, though a cure for some who fall away,
Yet we, poor souls ! should feel a quick decay ;
The wisest face amongst us will look silly,
And mine will change its roses for the lily.

But how prevent this terrible condition ?
There is one way—be you our kind physician :
For you will other doctors disagree,
And when you make your visits, *give* a fee.
' Hold ! ' cries a prude (thus rising from her stays),
' I hate a Playhouse, and their wicked plays ;
O ! 'tis a shame to suffer such an evil,
For seeing plays is dealing with the Devil ! "
I beg your pardon Madam,—'tis not true ;
We players are moral folks—I'll prove it too.
Man is a froward child—naughty and cross,
Without his rattle and his hobby-horse :
We play'rs are little master's bells and coral,
To keep the child from mischief—a'nt we moral?
In such a happy rich and crowded place,
What would become of the sweet babe of grace ?
Should you not act unkindly to refuse it
This little harmless plaything to amuse it ?
Good plays are useful toys—as such enjoy 'em ;
Whene'er they make you naughty—*then* destroy 'em."

In spite, however, of this initial success there appeared a fly of considerable dimensions in the theatrical ointment. The theatre had not been licensed, and the entertainment was perforce announced as " A Concert of Musick and a Specimen of Rhetorick." The net profits which amounted to £63 were handed over to the Bristol Infirmary. There was, of course, nothing original in this method of avoiding the penalties of the law. To quote only two instances, Foote during his tenancy of the Haymarket used to invite his audiences to " tea " and an " auction of pictures." Theophilus Cibber at the Richmond Theatre (1756), was even more ingenious. He at one time intimated that " Cibber and Co., snuff

merchants, sell at their warehouse at Richmond Hill most cephalic snuff, which, taken in moderate quantities, in the evening especially, will not fail to raise the spirits, clear the brain, throw off all ill humours, dispel the spleen, enliven the imagination, exhilarate the mind, give joy to the heart, and greatly invigorate and improve the understanding. Mr. Cibber has also opened at the aforesaid warehouse, late called the Theatre, on the hill, an historic academy for the instruction of young persons of genius in the art of acting, and proposes, for the better improvement of such pupils, and frequently with his assistance, to give public rehearsals without hire, gain, or reward."

This form of sophistry, necessary as it was under the circumstances, and safely calculated to satisfy those people who regarded the welfare of the theatre with a benevolent eye, failed entirely to allay the hostility of its inveterate opponents, who, according to Mr. Smith, presented the actors at the next meeting of Quarter Sessions on the ground that the provisions of the Licensing Act (1737) had been wantonly transgressed (1). But what had failed of effect in Hippisley's day was not likely to prove more successful after an interval of forty years during which the popularity of the stage had been steadily increasing, and their remonstrance was tacitly disregarded. Its terms, which were mere repetitions of the presentments to which we have referred in Chapter II., were set out at length in Felix Farley's Journal a few days after the opening of the Theatre, with an introduction, confessing the failure of their efforts.

(1.) See Appendix A.

> " The following REMONSTRANCE, from an affectionate concern for the Welfare of our City, and particularly the Preservation of the Youth, was sometime since presented to our Magistrates, and kindly received. It was hoped that the general Sense of the more useful and Sober Citizens, properly exerted, would have effectually prevented the Completion of the Theatre: But as the Edifice is now so far finished as to have been already used for its dangerous Purpose, we think it necessary to publish the said Remonstrance, in Hopes that it may excite a general and suitable Zeal amongst our Fellow-Inhabitants, To support the good Inclinations of our Magistrates Towards the Suppression of so Pernicious an Entertainment."

Thus slighted, they transferred their activities to a different sphere, and in the same year there was issued a diatribe in verse entitled " Bristol Theatre," which was published anonymously by Sarah Farley. It has since transpired that the author of this work was a Mr. Champion, a well-known Quaker in religion, and potter by trade. Judged by internal evidence there can be little doubt that Mr. Champion was not only the author of this particular poem, but also of " The Consequences of a New Theatre," the letter which appeared in Felix Farley's Bristol Journal in 1764, and the subsequent appeals to Parliament to which we shall presently refer. In each there is the same insistence upon the danger to public morals, the same unreasoning hatred of the playhouse, and the upholding of the former suppression of the actors as a commendable example to be followed under similar circumstances.

The poem opens with a grandiose comparison of the glory of Bristol with that of Rome, and then continues :—

" The *Play* calls forth : To meet its wish'd Return,
All Duties drop, and worthier Cares adjourn.
Thrice weekly claim'd, its Tribute's punctual paid,
Tho' just Demands in Commerce lie delay'd.
.....
But can none stop this Torrent ? Must it drown
Both Wealth and Worth, and bear Opposers down ?
Must what kind Heav'n, for Acts of Goodness lent,
Sink in theatric Vanities misspent ?
Must heav'n-born Minds resign their destin'd Sphere,
And, Folly's Victims, hide their Talents here ?
Then let us trace the Consequence, intent
This timely Flood of Warning to prevent ;
Or, if all Efforts shall in vain oppose,
To stand acquitted when the Deluge flows.
....
While hungry, helpless, Families implore
The falling Crumbs from Actors' plenteous Store,
Who reap, triumphant, 'midst the People's Woes,
A golden Harvest from their Sounds and Shows.
.....
So your Forefathers (tempted once like you,
Unfoil'd unmov'd) with Honour we review.
They saw a *Play-House* rise in recent pride ;
They saw, reluctant ; and its Use deny'd.
High on *Augustine's Back* the Fabric rais'd
A stately Front, and Crowds admiring gaz'd.
Yet as your sires in Virtue's Cause combin'd
The Dome stood guiltless of the Scenes design'd.
All Arts to win the wish'd Indulgence fail ;
The public Good, prepond'rant, turn'd the Scale.
Far happier Guardians to th'entrusted State
Than had they yielded to the guilded Bait !
This noble Stand their Mem'ries will adorn,

And reap the Praise of Numbers yet unborn,
May you, alike, repel th'illegal Bane,
Alike unmov'd, our wholesome Laws maintain.
To Rectitude her Sceptre to restore,
Out-do whate'er your Fathers did before.

.....

Tho' cautious Craft *at first* the Players guide,
They fling, when fix'd, th'ensnaring Mask aside.
In their own Colours,unabash'd and bare,
They smartly season their dramatic Ware,
To raise the Laugh ; regale with sportful Tone
The Taste, corrupt, that tallies with their own ;
Their jests obscene and Ribaldry diffuse,
Deride Religion, and its Friends abuse ;
Fire each rude Passion (check'd each useful Care)
T'insult the Modest, and assault the Fair ;
Promote Intrigues, and push the bold Design,
To break thro' Laws, both human and divine ;
Make all but Trifles, as when Infants play,
And laugh and reason Sin and Shame away ;
Ev'n tho' sad Ruin be by Wiles convey'd
To unsuspecting Innocence betray'd.
So *Nile's* amphibious Crocodiles decoy
And, softly soothing, Sycophants destroy.
Who see their Trap, with Sequels which it draws,
Its Dupes commis'rate, and commend the Laws.
How will Domestics quit all due Regard !
How the new 'Prentice prove untimely mar'd !
How Rakes in shameless Insolence ally'd,
And Stews and Strumpets roundly multiply'd,
Of Birds unclean how many a hateful Cage !
The Dregs and Rubbish of the baneful Stage !
What wild Disorders ! what discordant Jar
Will rouse the Tumults of intestine War !

What num'rous Ills, too tedious, too profound,
For Wit to fathom, or for Tongue to found!
This faithful Sketch no Gall of Malice brings;
Misrepresenting neither Man nor Things:
But honest Truth, to ev'ry Object due,
Must each delineate in its proper Hue.
If Force or Fraud o'erflow, without the Stage,
If vile Debauches of an iron Age;
How must their ampler Measures be deriv'd
From this old *Satan's Synagogue* reviv'd!
...."

There is an "Apology" at the end of the poem in which the writer states that he "would rather have chosen to publish his Sentiments on this important Subject in plain Prose; but for this single Reason, that many sooner peruse Sentiments conveyed in Poetry, and longer retain them," which suggests that Mr. Champion was not altogether satisfied with the response accorded to his earlier efforts.

Utterly groundless and narrow as these arguments may sound to modern ears, there is no doubt that they exercised a very visible effect upon the society of that day. Champion was the spokesman not merely of his own particular prejudices, but of the prejudices of a considerable section of the community, and the fortunes of the new theatre were by no means so secure as its patrons desired to see them. A Royal license was, of course, the sole method by which the theatre could be established on such a basis as to render it immune from the attacks of its enemies, who, to be honest, had the law clearly enough upon their side. But before this blessed consummation could be vouchsafed it was necessary that Parliament should pass a bill excluding the theatre

from the operation of the Licensing Act. The first step in this direction was frustrated by the Quaker element of the city, which on January 27th, 1773, issued the following remonstrance :

" A Petition to the House of Commons for licensing a Theatre being now privately handing about and as the Citizens at large greatly disapprove of such a measure the following Petitions to both Houses of Parliament have been drawn up and signed by several of the Inhabitants and will be left at the Bush Tavern in Corn Street from 12 till half-past 2 o'clock on Thursday, Friday and Saturday the 28th, 29th, and 30th inst. where attendance will be given to receive the signatures of those Citizens who are willing to discountenance and oppose a nuisance the pernicious consequences of which are too obvious to need a recital.

To the Rt. Honourable the Lords Spiritual and Temporal in Parliament assembled.

The humble Petition of the Inhabitants of the City of Bristol.

Herewith.

That your Petitioners hearing of an intended application to the Honourable House of Commons for leave to bring in a Bill for licensing a Theatre in this City and apprehensive that if the Bill should pass sufficient time might not be afforded for collecting the general sense of the Inhabitants, they, with the greatest humility beg leave to present a respectful address to your Lordships praying that your Lordships will not give it the sanction of your assurance.

That our Ancestors from the deep knowledge which experience gave them of the dangerous consequences

of licensing Playhouses framed excellent laws for their restraint, which still subsist as Monuments of their wisdom and every attempt to throw down this neecssary barrier must be subversive of the good order of government.

Your Petitioners therefore humbly entreat that they may not be deprived of Laws which check the dissolute manners of the Stage already too prevalent in this age of dissipation.—They place their confidence in the wisdom of your Lordships and venture to hope that every attempt to alter the present Laws in their City by a Bill to License a Theatre will meet with the disapproval of your Lordships."
And the same to the Commons.

But the friends of the drama were not to be so lightly checked. Once again they made their application, and once again the opposition endeavoured its utmost to crush their efforts. The bill was no sooner before Parliament than the alarm was raised.

" To the Trading and to the Religious Citizens of Bristol.

My fellow Citizens,

I Fear you do not see in a proper light, the great danger of having a Play-house licensed in this city. A Bill for that purpose is now before the house. If it should pass, the probable consequence will be, that we shall have performances in the winter. How that may effect the morals of your sons, daughters, apprentices, and servants, when they can conceal themselves by the darkness of the night, is but too apparent. There was a becoming and effectual opposition made to the former attempt to pass the Bill,

and surely the present melancholy situation of the Nation does not weaken the motives to the exertion of the same now.

Let some gentlemen, then, of character and Fortune step forth immediately, concert a proper plan, and invite their Fellow Citizens' concurrence, by appointing a place and time of pubjick meeting on the occasion.

This endeavour, I trust, will be successful, but, if otherwise, they will reap the pleasing satisfaction of having endeavoured to stem the torrent of vice."
February 7th, 1778.

Whether the " gentlemen of character and fortune " were forthcoming or not we have no means of knowing. Be this as it may, the bill on this occasion was duly passed by both houses and received the Royal assent. (1). Accordingly, on April 27th, 1778, letters patent were granted to George Daubeny, the nominee of the proprietors for the term of twenty-one years, at the respectable cost of £275, and have been renewed at intervals from the moment of their expiration until the beginning of the present century. (2). At least one of the alarmist's fears was verified: hitherto the theatrical season had extended only over the three summer months from July to September; it now included performances during the winter. The final announcement of the playhouse as " The Theatre in King-Street," appeared in 1778, and from thence onwards became " The Theatre Royal." (3).

Thus for close upon a hundred years the theatre in King Street stood defying opposition and the ever-changing

(1) See Appendix B. (2) See Appendix C. (3) Bristol was the second provincial City to obtain letters patent for its theatre, and not, as has been incorrectly stated, the sixth. The first was Manchester, in 1775.

residence of fashion. Some opposition of a professional character appeared from time to time but always unsuccessfully. As early as 1772-3 a rival company had attempted winter entertainments at Cooper's Hall but had been speedily crushed by the municipal authorities. A more serious opposition occurred several years later. At the end of 1811, or the beginning of 1812, theAssembly Rooms in Prince's Street " underwent considerable internal alteration," and a little later were re-opened as " The Regency Theatre," where the nature of the performances were as a rule those of pantomime and burletta. Some interval of time elapsed before the King Street management began to feel the pinch of opposition, but it so happened that in January 1813, Mrs. Jordan appeared at the Theatre Royal in a repertoire that failed to draw the public. On the eighteenth of that month a performance was given of " The City Wives Confederacy," the finale of which exhibited, according to an eye-witness, " four female legs—(we go no further) sprawling almost into the pit—Their owners having been tumbled, head over heels, upon the Stage ! " As a counter attraction the Regency announced their intention of producing " Timour the Tartar." Thereupon the management of the Theatre Royal determined to take action, and accordingly Mr. Betterton, Junior, the leading comedian of the rival theatre was hailed before the magistrates and committed to gaol for performing without a license. The sympathy of the town was, however, with the luckless Betterton, and the night after his arrest, which had been announced for his benefit, the citizens crowded to the doors of the Regency and there was a full house of £90.

For another week the manager of the Regency struggled to keep his doors open, but it was to no purpose.

The fortunes of his theatre declined rapidly, and its rival was left to pursue a triumphant course, until in its turn its brilliance was over-shadowed by the opening of the Prince's Theatre. Locality, the factor which had raised its fortunes at the expense of that of Jacob's Well was equally responsible for its eclipse which has persisted during half a century. Historically, however, it stands first and foremost among the Bristol theatres, and holds a position which is probably unique in the annals of England's provincial playhouses.

CHAPTER FIVE.

REPRESENTATIVE ACTORS

CHAPTER FIVE.

" The animated graces of the player can live no longer than the instant breath and motion that present them, or at best can but faintly glimmer through the memory or imperfect attestation of a few surviving spectators."
—Colley Cibber.

" As a rule, the lives of the players may be said to belong to the least important branch of entomology."
—A. B. Walkley.

In the long life of the Theatre Royal which has already endured for close upon one hundred and fifty years, almost every actor (though not every actress), of established reputation, during the last years of the eighteenth and the first fifty or sixty years of the nineteenth centuries, appeared at one time or another upon its boards. It would be impossible to give any detailed account of their numerous exits and entrances. It would be impossible, because the newspapers of an earlier date, unlike those of our own, bestowed comparatively little attention upon the appearances of celebrated performers, and in many instances the sole existing guarantee which we possess of their visits to Bristol is " the casual sight

of an old Play Bill." That Garrick was among the number is a pleasant myth that has received pretty general currency, but it may be here definitely stated, that though he took great interest in the welfare of the Theatre, and was almost certainly present in the building on the night of the first performance, given in 1766, he never, during his long career, appeared there in a professional capacity. Even without his name, there are more than sufficient to fill an entire volume devoted to this subject, and here we can do little more than furnish a few instances in which actors and actresses have been in some way intimately connected with Bristol and its stage, or have made an appearance of unusual significance. The bulk of these people simply came and went, and over them it is vain to linger. The following list, however, (which does not in any way pretend to be exhaustive), will be amply sufficient to give the reader a just impression of the high standard supported by the Theatre Royal in the art to which it was dedicated. That list comprises the names of Dodd, Baddeley, Quick, Bannister, Bensley, Inchbald, Grimaldi, Foote, Dimond, Elliston, Master Betty, Mrs. Siddons, John Philip Kemble, Stephen Kemble, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Kemble, Fanny Kemble, Mrs. Jordan, Charles Mathews and Madame Vestris, Edmund Kean and Charles Kean, Liston, the Incledons, Munden, Cooke, Miss O'Neil, Macready, Ellen Tree, Jenny Lind, Mr. and Mrs. Sims Reeves, George Rignold, Arthur Stirling, Marie Wilton (Lady Bancroft), the Sisters Terry, Madge Robertson (Mrs. Kendal) and Sir Henry Irving.

Amongst the original company of 1766, a name that has become famous in the Essays of Elia, is that of Thomas Dodd. Boaden too, gives a pleasant description

of his powers. "Dodd was the fopling of the drama rather than the age. He was, to be sure, the prince of pink heels and the soul of empty eminence. As he tottered rather than walked down the stage, in all the protuberance of muslin and lace in his cravats and frills, he reminded you of the jutting motion of the pigeon. His action was suited to his figure. He took his snuff, or his bergamot, with a delight so beyond all grosser enjoyments that he left you no doubt whatever of the superior happiness of a coxcomb."

Bensley, equally celebrated by Lamb, joined the company in 1778. His name is particularly associated with Bristol on account of his romantic marriage. He was one day driving towards the city in a postchaise, which, on turning a sharp bend in the road, collided with a lady on horseback. The lady was thrown, and Bensley hastened to her assistance. This was the beginning of a love affair which ended happily for both. She brought to the marriage a sum of £1,500, and Bensley, who was never disposed to be familiar with the members of his profession, retired from the stage a few years later.

Quick, who came to Bristol in 1768, married the daughter of a local clergyman. He was an excellent comedian, as we may judge from the following account of his abilities, which incidentally gives a pleasant insight into his relations with George III. who had a partiality for Quick's society and was fond of calling him "his player." "Quick had most generally to sustain the testy old gullible personage. There was the same constantly florid face, the same compression of the mouth and elevation of the eyebrows, the same shrill squeak in the utterance, and odd totter in the step; but his entrance was invariably the signal for honest hearty

merriment. To this general effect of Quick's acting, an important circumstance in his theatrical life most powerfully contributed. He was beyond comparison in comedy, the decided favourite of the late King, a determined patron of the stage. There was a gay and hearty jocularity about the King while sitting at a comedy —a something so endearing to see greatness relaxing from its state, throwing off, and apparently, glad to throw off, some of the trammels of royalty, and exhibiting, without the least restraint, a full sense of pleasure at a liberal and enlightened amusement. Quick's powers of entertainment were not confined to the stage; he told a story admirably. The late King sometimes had him in attendance at Buckingham House; and the little time he could spare from the varied business that pressed upon him he delighted to pass in listening to Quick's eccentricities. He frequently appointed to see him in the riding-house, and took his amusement and his exercise together."

Another favourite comedian who made his first appearance at Bristol in the same year as Quick, was Ned Shuter, to whom we have referred in an earlier chapter, and of whom Churchill remarked that he,

> " never cared a single pin,
> Whether he left out nonsense or put in."

Shuter, who began life as a billiard-marker, was described by Garrick as " the greatest comic genius " he had ever known, but Churchill's strictures, supported by the testimony of Davies in his account of Hippisley (supra), make it evident that like Penkethman, Shuter was prone to embellish the lines of his author for the sake of added applause. His most famous impersonations were those of Old Hardcastle and Sir Anthony Absolute,

in both of which he was the original, Papillon in "The Liar," and Justice Woodcock in "Love in a Village." He was of a peculiar, though not altogether uncommon temperament. While drinking to excess (not seldom in the company of Churchill), he was at the same time of an intensely religious turn of mind. Wilkinson relates how he used to accompany Shuter in his Sunday devotions; at six to Tottenham Court Road Chapel; at ten to a meeting house in Long Acre; at three to another, and in the evenings to another. Whitfield, himself an inveterate opponent of the theatre, once gave dispensation to his flock to attend a performance for Shuter's benefit, on the distinct understanding that it was "for once, on that night only." Shuter's last appearance was as Falstaff in May, 1776. He died in the following November, constant drinking and praying having gone far to undermine his mental faculties.

Holland, who was the friend of Powell, and who in many respects shared that unhappy actor's talents and limitations, was one of the original managers of the theatre. Chatterton conceived an exaggerated notion of his powers, and addressed to him some commendatory verses which began:

"What numbers, Holland, can the muses find
To sing thy merit in each varied part;
When action, eloquence, and ease combined,
Make nature but a copy of thy art?"

Holland died of small-pox in 1769, and was buried in Chiswick church, Garrick composing an epitaph that goes some way to rival Chatterton's encomium:

"If talents, to make entertainment instruction, to support the credit of the stage by just and manly action, and to adorn society by virtues which would honour

any rank and profession, deserve remembrance; let him with whom these talents were long exerted, to whom these virtues were well-known, and by whom the loss of them will be long lamented, bear testimony to the worth and abilities of his departed Friend, CHARLES HOLLAND, who was born March 12, 1733, died the 7th Dec., 1769, and was buried near this place.

D. Garrick."

The famous Elliston was intermittently a member of the company for a period of a dozen years. Elliston, having run away from his uncle, came to Bath, where he was engaged by Dimond, who had not then acquired the management of the Bristol Theatre, which he was to do twenty years later. Elliston made his debut at Bath in the character of Tressell in Cibber's Richard III., on April 21st, 1791 (1), and two years later appeared at the Theatre Royal. His next appearance was in July, 1796, where at a benefit performance he cleared a sum of nearly one hundred pounds, a figure never before equalled in Bristol. Three years later the future King of Drury Lane amused himself during the Lent season by delivering a series of lectures in Bristol and Bath on "morals and general criticism," which are said to have attracted large audiences and amply repaid him for the little labour expended.

Later in the same year, Elliston engaged upon an undertaking that must have made a lively appeal to his imagination. While performing at Bristol, a royal command was sent down for him to appear for a number

(1.) The Dictionary of National Biography states that Elliston made his first appearance at Bristol on 25th April, 1791. Raymond, his biographer, does not support this.

of representations at Windsor. Nothing daunted, Elliston determined to fulfill both engagements, with the consequence that for a fortnight he was obliged to travel incessantly between these two places, hurrying from the one to the other as soon as a performance was finished. This exploit was facetiously termed by one of his friends, "night errantry." He made his last appearance as a member of the stock company in 1804, but returned to Bristol on more than one occasion as a "star." Raymond gives a pleasant sketch of him before his eccentricities had marred his abilities as an actor. "In person, Elliston was of the middle size and well-proportioned: his countenance the very Mirror of Comedy. His face was round, his features small yet highly expressive; laughter lay cradled in his eyes; and there was a noticeable play of lip so pregnant of meaning, as frequently to leave the words that followed but little to explain. He displayed the art of tenderness and persuasion more strikingly than any actor of his time. There was a warmth—a glow of colouring in all his impersonations which constantly pleased. Nothing crude or unripe was of his gathering; all was mature and yielding—sometimes eccentric, but never exaggerated."

On September 4th, 1772, Elizabeth Inchbald, not yet nineteen years of age, performed the part of Cordelia, "being her first appearance on any stage," her husband playing Lear for a benefit.

A still more notable appearance in Bristol was that of Sarah Siddons, on the 15th of March, 1779, as the Countess of Salisbury—Dimond, who was equally appearing in Bristol for the first time, sustaining the role of Salisbury. Mrs. Siddons, whose salary was at that time

£3 a week, was accompanied by her husband, who does not seem to have played any important parts. During her engagement which extended to 1781, the great tragedienne appeared as Emelina in "The Fatal Marriage," Portia, Belvidera, Mrs. Candour, Lady Macbeth, Sigismunda, and on one occasion as Hamlet, thereby anticipating Sarah Bernhardt by nearly a century.

Henceforward, Mrs. Siddons came to Bristol only as a "star," Indeed the time was now not far distant when Charles Lamb was to lament the disappearance of the all-round cast. Speaking of old play bills, he remarks sadly, "they make us think how we *once* used to read a Play-Bill—not, as now peradventure, singling out a favourite performer, and casting a negligent eye over the rest; but spelling out every name, down to the very mutes and servants of the scene." For the future, all-round excellence was to give place to individual brilliance, and the names of the celebrated actors and actresses who came to Bristol, belong, not to the Theatre Royal, but to the metropolitan stage. With one exception, no local interest attaches to their presence. That exception was Macready, whose father became manager of the Theatre on March 22nd, 1819, a welcome change which was heralded in a letter issued a few days previously.

"... To trace out the causes of the Drama's reduction in Bristol, from the high state of favour and repute in which it once flourished, would be as fruitless as laborious. The fact is sufficiently ascertained to justify this preliminary appeal to such as may desire the enjoyment of a well-regulated Theatre.

The Manager, solicitous to let no occasion slip of redeeming his pledge to use every exertion in bringing

forward THE FIRST POSSIBLE ENTERTAINMENT that can be procured, has the gratification of informing the Ladies and Gentlemen of Bristol and its Vicinity, that, having obtained permission from the Covent Garden Proprietor, he is enabled to open the Theatre with the United Talents of

MR. MACREADY
and
MR. TERRY
From the Theatre-Royal, Covent Garden.

who are engaged to perform here THREE NIGHTS Only, their leave of absence not permitting them to Act here beyond Mon., Tues., and Wed., on which Evenings they will be supported by

Mrs. Yates,
Of the Theatre-Royal, Covent Garden,

who is engaged at this Theatre for a limited period."

William Charles Macready gives an account of the assistance he rendered his father on this occasion. "My father's difficulties meantime had thickened around him; he had lost the Newcastle Theatre, his main dependence, and had opened a negotiation for the lease of that at Bristol. But the funds required to leave his old abode and enter on a new speculation were wanting. These were supplied by the contributions of our relations, the Birches, and myself .... Fortunately, I was able to avail myself of some vacant nights at Covent Garden to engage Terry, and, taking him down with me to Bristol, we presented a very imposing bill of fare for the inauguration of my father's new enterprise, by acting together for him the first three nights of his season, beginning with Easter Monday. This was a good start for him, and he was able to maintain his

position in that city with general respect and in comfortable circumstances for the remainder of his life."

William Charles Macready married an actress, whom he had recommended to his father, and whom he not infrequently met when he came to Bristol, where she was for some time engaged as a member of the company. Writing of the year 1822, he says, "In the course of the past two seasons I had made several excursions to my father's theatre in Bristol, where crowded houses almost invariably welcomed me. These visits brought more particularly under my notice the young actress, Miss Atkins, who had so won upon my interest. In her unaffected pathos and sprightliness I had seen the germ of very rare talent, and was anxious its development should not be marred by any premature attempt. The counsel which, in consequence, I sought to impress on her led to frequent conversations and eventually to correspondence, which I tried to make instrumental to the advancement of her education, and then it was, in my case as no doubt in hers, that 'love approached me under friendship's name,' although unsuspected and unconfessed in either of us."

For a short period of time, dating from Dec., 1837, Macready, in conjunction with a Mr. Woulds, became manager of the Bath and Bristol Theatres. Bristol supported his venture nobly, but at Bath he met with such ill-success that he is reported to have lost nearly £1000 during a single season.

In January, 1850, Macready gave a series of farewell performances at Bristol, in which he appeared as Iago, Virginius, Lear, Henry IV., and Lord Townley. He himself gives a description of this last appearance :—

"As the curtain was falling I stepped forward; the audience, unprepared, gave most fervent greeting. On silence I addressed them, quite overcome by recollections, the present cordiality and my own feelings to 'good old Bristol.' 'Ladies and Gentlemen,—I have not waited to-night for the summons with which you have usually honoured me. As this is the last time I shall ever appear on this stage before you I would beg leave to offer a few parting words, and would wish them to be beyond question the spontaneous tribute of my respect. It is not my intention to trespass at any length upon your patience. The little that I have to say may be briefly said. Indeed, attempt at display or effect seems to me scarcely in accordance with the occasion—to me, in truth, a melancholy one—and certainly would very imperfectly interpret the feelings which prompt me to address you. For a long course of years—indeed, from the period of my early youth—I have been welcomed by you in my professional capacity with demonstrations of favour so fervent and so constant that they have in some measure appeared in this nature to partake almost of a personal interest. Under the influence of such an impression, sentiments of deep and strong regard have taken firm root in my mind, and it is therefore little else than a natural impulse for me, at such a moment to wish to leave with you the assurance that, as I have never been insensible to your kindness, so I shall never be forgetful of it. Ladies and Gentlemen, I should vainly task myself to find due expression for those emotions which I shall ever cherish towards you. Let me, therefore, at once and for all, tender you my warmest thanks, joined with my regretful adieu, as in my profession of an actor I most gratefully and respectfully bid you a last farewell."

Marie Wilton (Lady Bancroft) was, during the early fifties, a very humble member of the old stock company. She gives the following account of her engagement :—

"After further wanderings—we joined the company of the Bristol Theatre, of which Mr. James Henry Chute was manager. My first appearance there was in the opening of a pantomime as 'No-Wun-No-Zoo,' Spright of the Silver Star,' ; the sky opened, and I was discovered high up in the clouds, prettily dressed in pale blue silk and spangles, my long hair hanging in large waves over my shoulders. . . . .

I gradually became a great favourite, and was happy in Bristol where there was a most excellent company, many of whom have since been well known. It was an admirably conducted theatre, and will always be remembered by me as my stepping stone to London. Mr. Chute was an excellent Manager ; a severe disciplinarian, but a tender-hearted and just man. . . . . Fines were strictly inflicted in those days ; but I have known Mr. Chute many a time return, privately, the forfeit money to those who he knew could ill afford to spare it, saying, 'Do not say anything about it, and do not be late again'—a good, kind-hearted, severe old manager. The work was hard, but some of our best artists have left the old King Street Theatre to fill leading positions in London."

Bristol, was, as Lady Bancroft says, her 'stepping-stone' to London. Charles Dillon, attracted by one of her performances, offered her an engagement at the Lyceum, and Marie Wilton bade farewell to Bristol and the Theatre Royal.

Irving's connection with Bristol started at the early age of four, when his parents came to reside at No. 1, Wellington Place, Ashley Road, in 1842. "Although I cannot claim to have been born in Bristol," he said on one occasion, "here were spent some of my youngest days. Some vast amount of years ago, the S.S. *Great Britain* was launched; and I remember, on the occasion, being greatly impressed by the moustache worn by Prince Albert, the Prince Consort. Being desirous of emulating a fashion, then almost singular, I expressed a desire—being five years of age—to cultivate a moustache myself. This ambition (certainly a harmless one) coming to the knowledge of a particular friend of mine—a local chemist in St. James's Barton—he said he would prepare and grow one for me if I would abide in patience. Days passed, which I endured restlessly, when, tired to death, I suppose, of my importunities, my friend at last put me upon a stool and magically effected the much-desired growth. My happiness was, of course, supreme; and proceeding to my home, a few houses off, I was most indignant to find vulgar and ill-mannered persons turning round and laughing at my dignified appearance, and, bitterly complaining to my mother of their conduct, she laughed more heartily than anybody, and, soothing and appeasing me, she, with the aid of a little soap and water, gently removed the adornment, which consisted entirely of burnt cork. But I think my first spark of ambition was really struck on that glorious morning when I saw Van Amburgh, the famous lion-tamer, drive, I think it was twenty-four horses, down Park Street, and afterwards give his thrilling performance in the lion's den. I don't say that I yearned from that moment to drive a herd of horses or to domesticate lions; but they seem

to me emblematic of the pictorial side of the drama—its pomp and circumstance. And in later years I found that it needed a cool head—almost as cool as Van Amburgh's—to manage a theatre, where there are steep places—almost as steep as Park Street—but in another way." (1)

Irving, in the days of his celebrity, was a not infrequent visitor to Bristol, though the majority of his appearances took place at the Prince's Theatre, and it was here that in September, 1894, he first produced Conan Doyle's "A Story of Waterloo," one of his most famous performances. On his return from America in 1904, Irving appeared for the last time in Bristol, between June 6th–11th, playing, amongst other characters, that of Tennyson's "Becket." On the 10th of the month, he was present at a complimentary banquet, the chair in which he sat being the one from which the Prince Consort had witnessed the launch of the *Great Britain*, when the great actor had himself been an enthusiastic spectator. "This is a memorable gathering for me," he told those who were present—"a gathering which adds another link to the chain of affectionate remembrances binding me to Bristol . . . . and I want to thank you very simply, but very gratefully, for this proof of a regard which I have prized most highly for many a year."

Barry Sullivan, the last of the rhetorical actors, was connected with Bristol in a manner not dissimilar to Irving. He came to the City with his parents when he was two, and lived with them at a house in Trenchard Street.

(1) It has frequently been stated that Irving was at one time a junior clerk in the firm of Messrs. Budgett, Wholesale Grocers in Nelson Street. His biographer, Mr. Austin Brereton, makes no reference to this episode.

He was first educated at a day school in the same street; subsequently he went to the Endowed School in Stoke's Croft, and at fourteen became apprenticed to an attorney whose office was in the building of the Council House. Although Sullivan never appeared at the King Street Theatre in later years, as a boy he was a constant member of the audience, and so deeply was he influenced at the sight of Macready's performances, that he founded an amateur dramatic society amongst his fellow apprentices. Two rooms of a house in Host Street, near the Colston Hall, were hired by the young enthusiasts, and performances given. The law proved itself little to Sullivan's liking, and in 1837, he left his master's house to join a company of strolling players who were on their way through Bristol to Swansea. It was not until thirty-one years later that Sullivan returned to Bristol, where he appeared at the Prince's Theatre in the character of Hamlet.

Mrs. Kendal (Madge Robertson) first appeared at the Theatre Royal when only six years of age. She then played Eva, in an adaptation of "Uncle Tom's Cabin," when her singing was so greatly applauded that for some time, her parents contemplated training her either for Opera or the Concert platform. But when her school-days were over, Madge Robertson ultimately chose a stage career, and became a member of the old stock company.

The Terry's connexion with the Bristol stage is described by one who was himself a less distinguished member of the company:—"It was in the early sixties .... that Ellen Terry and her elder sister Kate (now Mrs. Arthur Lewis), were engaged by the late James Henry Chute as members of his stock company, Kate playing the juvenile lead, and the principal ladies in

the classical burlesques, which were then the vogue, and quite as attractive as the legitimate drama.... Ellen Terry was then a girl of about fourteen, of tall figure, with a round, dimpled, laughing, mischievous face, a pair of merry, saucy grey eyes, and an aureole of golden hair, which she wore, in the words of a modern ditty, 'hanging down her back.' Although dwarfed, in a measure, as an actress by the more experienced skill and the superior *rôles* of her fascinating sister, Ellen soon became a great favourite in Bristol.

"....Miss Hodson was at that time a deservedly great favourite, but the Terry sisters unconsciously became the founders of a new cult among local playgoers, and set up an empire of their own; in fact, I am hardly exaggerating if I say that there were, among the gilded youth of Bristol, two rival factions—the Hodson faction and the Terry faction, whose friendly antagonism was as keen, if not as fatal, as that of the Montagues and the Capulets!...." a fact which is substantiated by Miss Terry herself in "The Story of my Life."

CHAPTER SIX.

THE PRINCE'S THEATRE

CHAPTER SIX.

" I vow, I don't much like this transmigration,
Strolling from place to place by circulation."

—William Congreve.

" In the gradual development of free competition amongst all theatres, the natural ambition of every successful actor to have a theatre of his own has led to the dispersion of dramatic talent and to the establishment of the ' Star ' system. under which every theatre secures the services of one leading actor, while first-rate talent in the minor parts is rarely seen. At the same time the best interests, both of theatrical art and dramatic literature, have been subordinated to purely commercial considerations."—The Life of Edward Bulwer.

In October 1866, Mr. James Henry Chute, who at that time was the manager of the Theatre Royal, purchased a large house in Park Row at the cost of £18,000. The erection of a new play-house was immediately undertaken, and on the 14th of the month and year following, the New Theatre Royal, which subsequently altered its name to the Prince's Theatre, was opened with a

performance of the Tempest, and the after-farce of "A Rough Diamond." The auditorium was designed to seat 340 persons in the dress boxes, 100 in the orchestra stalls, 800 in the pit, 360 in the upper circle and amphitheatre, and 800 in the gallery. The following is an account given in the Bristol Mercury of the opening of the New Theatre:

"The really beautiful and elegantly-decoratedTemple of the Muses which has been erected in Park Row within the past six months, thanks to the energy, enterprise, and practical judgment of Mr. J. H. Chute, the skill of the architect (Mr. Phipps), and the taste and cunning art of the craftsmen whom he has employed, was opened on Monday night at the very hour named by the manager before the foundation stone was laid, and (despite the difficulties which are inseparable from a first night's representation) with an éclat which gives abundant promise of its future success..... The doors opened on Monday at a quarter-past six o'clock, and the large building was speedily filled, the dress circle, private boxes, and pit stalls being occupied by the most fashionable residents of our city and neighbourhood. When the sun-light was fully turned on, and a blaze of light brought out the beauties of the house, there was a loud burst of applause. The raising of the green baize curtain and disclosure of the beautiful act drop led to a second shout of approbation..... Mr. Chute then came forward, and was received in a manner that warmly testified to the respect in which he is held and the approbation with which his enterprising spirit is regarded by the public. The plaudits were continued round after round, and it was some minutes before he could utter

a word. He then spoke as follows :—' I wish the first words uttered upon these boards to be those of welcome. I am most proud and happy in being able this evening to say, ladies and gentlemen, you are most heartily welcome. It is usual on occasions like the present for the manager to deliver a poetic address, and, ' with much verbosity,' ' throw himself upon a British public's generosity.' I thought a few simple and sincere words would be more in keeping and more acceptable to you, ' for never anything can be amiss when simpleness and duty tender it.' .... Various objections have been made from time to time against the drama. Some people like to be gloomy; they have a bitter pleasure in believing that man was sent into the world to go sorrowing through it, to them an artistic display is an awful exhibition. They are ignorant that the stage is the lay pulpit of the people, for here we preach six times a week; and that it presents the most practical morality in a more persuasive and irresistible way than any other method of appeal. It is nothing to say that abuses have existed; we are told that ' foul things will creep into a palace.' It is the abuse and not the use of the thing that makes the evil..... This is a great undertaking to be carried out single-handed by one man, and that man not a rich one. I have given ten hostages to fortune and the effort to redeem them has kept me from being a rich man, but though not rich in money, I am rich in friends, who come nobly to support and assist me, and I am very proud in being thus able to acknowledge my gratitude to them."

As to the future of the Prince's Theatre it would be idle to speculate, but it is undoubtedly the business of

the historian to attempt to trace the causes that have hitherto prevented this, the last-built theatre in Bristol, from attaining to the celebrity or the artistic importance of the Theatre Royal. Those causes can in no single instance be attributed to local conditions which have been admirable. No theatre has ever possessed two more capable or devoted managers than Mr. James Henry Chute and his son Mr. James Macready Chute. Nor has locality proved other than an advantageous factor, for the new site in Park Row was selected in accordance with the ever-increasing tendency for the residential quarters of the city to radiate farther and farther away from the centres of business. In this respect the new theatre has been an undoubted success: it has never lacked audiences and consequently material prosperity. Yet the fact remains that historically as well as artistically, this theatre is one of second-rate importance, and in no way comparable with its predecessor.

The causes which have militated against the success of the Prince's Theatre are common to the entire theatrical world, and Bristol has not been alone in the deterioration of her dramatic qualities. The advent of the star has been noted in a previous chapter, but more remains to be said of a system which has effected pernicious consequences upon the art of acting and the excellence of dramatic literature.

The result of the "star" system has been one of personal aggrandisement at the expense of artistic unity. One thing, I think I may safely postulate without fear of contradiction, and that is that in a just representation of a work of dramatic art its three constituent parts rank in importance thus: first, as Hamlet observes, the play; second, the acting, and third, the

setting. Any attempt to upset the order of this sequence is a direct contravention of the laws of the theatre. The star, consciously or otherwise, *has* upset this order, and the play has become a mere means to an end—the magnifying out of all due proportion of a single actor's or actress's personality. Thus the appeal made to the play-goer is no longer to witness a performance of, let us say, Hamlet or Macbeth, but an invitation to admire the excellence with which M or N is able to impersonate the principal characters in those two plays. It would, of course, be ridiculous to argue that Hamlet is not a very much more important character than Polonius, but when the main business of the actor representing Polonius is not to individualise the part he is playing, but merely to lend point to Hamlet's posturings, he ceases to interest the spectator. The result is inevitably an over-throw of artistic balance.

Following closely in the wake of the star system there appeared that inveterate opponent of true art,—the actor-manager, who, as the name itself implies, attempts to fill a double function, that of artist combined with tradesman. He is obliged by the nature of his position to consider two aspects of his business, the artistic and the economic, so that whenever art and finance come into conflict as they not infrequently do, the actor-manager is called upon to decide the point in issue, and—human nature being what it is—the chances are greatly in favour of his leaning to the side of finance. It is evident that though the artist in him may dictate a particular policy, the tradesman may successfully oppose it with a threat of financial loss. Moreover, the qualities which go to make a good actor are not usually those of a good business man. Thus it comes about that the

principles of commerce, after slowly but very surely strangling those of art, have for the most part taken complete possession of the theatre, a fact which becomes patent when we hear of successful tradesmen regarding the drama as a profitable field of investment. It may, on the other hand, be argued that Cibber was an actor-manager, and that none the less the "palmy days" of the drama were those of his management at Drury Lane. This seems to me but a half truth. Cibber was a better manager than he was actor, just as Wilkes was the reverse, but the policy of the theatre was then deliberated upon by a triumvirate, whose separate interests converged in a just regard for the artistic side of their business, a matter too frequently lost sight of by the modern actor manager.

Closely associated with the star system and the rise of the actor-manager, is the undue prominence which has been bestowed upon mise en scène. As far back as the days of the Restoration we find that scenic effects were employed to bolster up deficiencies of acting. There were at that time, as the reader is probably aware, only two companies of actors permitted by royal licence to perform in London,—the King's Servants, under the management of Thomas Killigrew, and the Duke of York's Servants, under Sir William Davenant. "These two companies," says Cibber, "were both prosperous for some few years, 'till their variety of plays began to be exhausted. Then, of course, the better actors (which the King's seem to have been allowed) could not fail of drawing the greater audiences. Sir William Davenant, therefore, master of the Duke's Company, to make head against their success, was forced to add spectacle and musick to action; and to introduce

a new species of plays .... all set off with the most expensive decorations of scenes and habits, with the best voices and dancers.

" This sensual supply of sight and sound, coming in to the assistance of the weaker party, it was no wonder they should grow too hard for sense and simple nature, when it is consider'd how many more people there are that can see and hear than think and judge. So wanton a change of the publick taste, therefore, began to fall as heavy upon the King's Company, as their greater excellence in action had fallen upon their competitors. Of which encroachment upon wit, several good prologues in those days frequently complain'd."

There has assuredly been no period when greater attention has been bestowed upon scenic effects than during the last fifty years, and we cannot but regard the late Sir Henry Irving as being in this respect one of the worst offenders. Irving and his scenery constituted the play : the rest of the company was so much padding in his doublet. That he himself was conscious of this, I do not for a moment suppose. Indeed, he frequently protested that scenery was nothing more than an adjunct to his productions, and the point is harped upon with more insistence than seems necessary by his biographer. Concentration upon details leads to over-elaboration, and all these protestations to the contrary crumble away before pictorial (to say nothing of verbal) evidence.

Mr. George Moore reviewing the dramatic conditions of that day in a very candid article remarks : " For some time past the tendency of Mr. Irving's management has been in the direction of pantomime. The production of Faust (of the Irving Faust) was the first decisive step, and the success of this experiment in witches and

blue devils showed him that the utmost licence would be allowed in the substitution of scenery and his own personality for the text of the author. Mr. Irving understands better than any one the baseness of modern taste, and he appeals to it more flagrantly than any other manager. . . . . He dresses out his Theatre as Octave in Au Bonheur des Dames dressed out his shop; he has invariably appealed, though never before so outrageously, to the sensual instincts rather than to the imagination. Others may praise him for this; but I look back to those times when theatrical audiences did not require *real* fountains and *real* trees, and I cannot but believe that they who did not require these realities were gifted with a sense that is wanting in us."

If we discount something from the exaggeration of this opinion, there none the less remains more than a modicum of truth. Irving's brilliant ability is not to be denied: what is here suggested is that from an evolutionary standpoint his influence upon the theatre was perverse. He employed the works of Shakespeare as a convenient back-ground for his own personality combined with an exhibition of scenic display by Hawes Craven or Alma Tadema. Thus it is not surprising to find, if we may judge from the following extract from the Bristol Mercury, that the Prince's Theatre was determined to follow in the tracks of a vicious fashion:

> "... The Stage has been constructed so as to admit of the successful working of large scenic effects and mechanical appliances, and the gas arrangements with reference to that part of the building will comprise a novel series of footlights, upon a principle invented by Mr. Chute."

And now what of the play? It had fallen from its high estate and become the last consideration of the theatre instead of the first. Actors and scene-painters abounded; dramatists were lacking. Nor, under such conditions, is it much to be wondered at that men of literary talent turned aside from the theatre in disgust, and employed their abilities elsewhere. To quote only two examples: Meredith wrote but a fragment, and Mr. Hardy which though for artistic reasons (he himself calls it "caprice") he chose to cast into a dramatic form, is not adaptable to the limitations of stage representation. Fresh blood ceased to flow in the veins of the drama, and it became sterile. Decadence had set in. Traces of this still remain in what is to-day the logical outcome of such a procedure—the musical comedy, in which setting has finally triumphed over acting, and the play is non-existent.

Happily for us, the last twenty-five years have witnessed a recrudescence of the art of the dramatist, the incentive coming from two outside sources,—France and Norway. This chapter is not a fit place in which to trace the various stages of the metamorphosis, but it may be briefly stated that the net result has been to bring the drama into line with contemporary thought outside the theatre, and to develop it into what it never was before—a criticism of life. This is chiefly owing to the work of Henrik Ibsen. It is true that Ibsen's plays have achieved no more than a tepid popularity in this country, but the influence which he has exerted over modern English dramatists has been immense. The essential difference between the spirit of present-day drama, and the drama which held the stage from the time of Marlowe down to that of Lord Lytton, is suffi-

ciently indicated by Mr. Shaw in a passage which, despite its facile cheapness, succinctly expresses the surface-aspect of the change. "Our uncles seldom murder our fathers, and cannot legally marry our mothers; we do not meet witches; our kings are not as a rule stabbed and succeeded by their stabbers; and when we raise money by bills we do not promise to pay pounds of our flesh." In other words, modern drama is pre-occupied, not with matters which occur only in strange places, and under strange conditions, but with those problems which come within the orbit of our actual experiences. Broadly speaking, the drama of 1560 to 1850 was romantic; the drama of the last generation has been naturalistic.

With a change of subject matter came a change of dramatic technique, for the old rhetorical forms of composition were found to be unsuited to the expression of modern ideas. "From the reign of Queen Elizabeth right into the reign of Queen Victoria," writes Mr. Walkley in "Drama and Life," "there has been a continuous tradition of stage technique which is not ours. It was a technique, ... conditioned by the material arrangements of the playhouse, and chiefly by the situation of the stage with respect to the audience (1). .... The transformation of the old drama of rhetoric into the modern drama of illusion is the artistic outcome of a mechanical transformation—the transformation of the platform-stage into the picture-stage." In the

(1.) I cannot altogether agree with Mr. Walkley that "Here then, is another of the many cases in which Art has been shaped less by its own inherent needs than by external causes, economic and social," for rhetorical plays are still performed with some effect upon the illusion-stage. Rather, I think, did Art's inherent needs shape the new technique, and that external causes contributed in a lesser degree to the evolution of the picture-stage.

old drama the actors spoke *at* the audience, whereas in modern drama they appear utterly unconscious of any presence other than the presence of those upon the stage, and hence with an increasing tendency towards illusion, possibilities occur to the modern actor which would not have been practicable upon the platform-stage. Indeed, the main difference between the old and the new technique is that the former aimed at breadth while the latter aims at subtlety.

All these various changes have effected a revolution in the theatre. They have called into being the Repertory Movement which is the logical outcome of the new conditions just at the musical comedy is the logical outcome of the old. The proper sequence of play, acting, setting, has been restored. The Repertory, unlike the strictly Commercial theatre, seeks the play of ideas, the homogeneous presentation, and the reduction of scenery to its function of accessory, not of protagonist. Moreover, the new form of drama and the new art of acting are both unsuited to a theatre of large dimensions, and hence the " théâtre intime " is beginning to receive a juster appreciation of its merits than it has hitherto been accorded.

In the light of these discursive paragraphs, it is not difficult to judge the disadvantages under which the Prince's Theatre has laboured. Its very size has been a factor arrayed against it. It came into existence at a period when the drama as a form of artistic expression was undergoing, if not a total, at any rate a partial eclipse, and has been the home of stars and actor-managers.

Lastly, the introduction of the touring system completely destroyed the possibilities of actors forming ties with their audiences. It cut them off from social

intercourse. Mr. Jenkins in his "Memoirs" mentions an old actor named Winstone, who was always to be found seated in the Exchange Coffee House, gossiping with the city merchants. The picture is a pleasant one and is illustrative of the terms on which the old "stock" actors lived with their patrons. But with the death of Mr. J. H. Chute in 1878, the stock company came to an end. From that time forward, not merely was the actor confined to the society of his fellow players, but instead of in his time playing many parts, he was condemned for months at a time, and sometimes for years, to play the same part without variation, throughout the length and breadth of the British Isles. This is another scandal which the institution of a Repertory Theatre is calculated to remedy. Social amenities under these conditions become once more a possibility between the actor and those to whom he exhibits his art, and that art is more satisfactorily appreciated by his audience, as well as justified by himself, when he is given the opportunity of appearing in a number of characters of varying importance.

All these elements have militated against the artistic success of the Prince's Theatre. The long history of a local theatre has widened, not with advantage, into that of the theatre generally, and unless, as seems possible, Bristol is once more to become possessed of a purely local playhouse, the historian of the future, who carries on this narrative to a later date, will be forced to chronicle something that is not in any sense of the word locally exclusive, but merely a segment of a larger, and in many ways a less absorbing study.

APPENDICES.

APPENDIX A.

ANNO DECIMO GEORGII II.

C.A.P. XXVIII.

An Act to explain and amend so much of an Act made in the twelfth Year of the Reign of Queen Anne, intituled, *An Act for reducing the Laws relating to Rogues, Vagabonds, sturdy Beggars, and Vagrants into one Act of Parliament; and for the more effectual punishing such Rogues, Vagabonds, sturdy Beggars, and Vagrants; and sending them whither they ought to be sent,* as relates to common Players of Interludes.

"Whereas by an Act of Parliament made in the twelfth Year of the Reign of her late Majesty Queen Anne, intituled, *An Act for reducing the Laws relating to Rogues, Vagabonds, sturdy Beggars, and Vagrants into one Act of Parliament; and for the more effectual punishing such Rogues, Vagabonds, sturdy Beggars, and Vagrants, and sending them whither they ought to be sent,* it was enacted That all Persons pretending themselves to be Patent

Gatherers or Collectors for Prisons, Gaols, or Hospitals, and wandering abroad for that Purpose, all Fencers, Bearwards, Common Players of Interludes, and other Persons therein named and expressed, shall be deemed Rogues and Vagabonds: And whereas some Doubts have arisen concerning so much of the said Act as relates to Common Players of Interludes: Now for explaining and amending the same, be it declared and enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That from and after the twenty-fourth Day of *June*, one thousand seven hundred and thirty seven, every Person who shall for Hire, Gain, or Reward, act, represent, or perform, or cause to be acted, represented, or performed, any Interlude, Tragedy, Comedy, Opera, Play, Farce, or other Entertainemnt of the Stage, or any Part or Parts therein, in case such Person shall not have any legal Settlement in the Place where the same shall be acted, represented, or performed, without Authority by virtue of Letters Patent from his Majesty, his Heirs, Successors, or Predecessors, or without licence from the Lord Chamberlain of his Majesty's Household for the time being, shall be deemed to be a Rogue and a Vagabond within the Intent and Meaning of the said recited Act, and shall be liable and subject to all such Penalties and Punishments, and by such Methods of Conviction, as are inflicted on, or appointed by the said Act for the Punishment of Rogues and Vagabonds who shall be found wandering, begging, and misordering themselves, within the Intent and Meaning of the said recited Act.

II. And be it further enacted by the Authority aforesaid, that if any Person having or not having a legal

settlement as aforesaid shall, without such Authority or Licence as aforesaid, act, represent, or perform, or cause to be acted, represented, or performed, for Hire, Gain, or Reward, any Interlude, Tragedy, Comedy, Opera, Play, Farce, or other Entertainment of the Stage, or any Part or Parts therein, every such Person shall for every such Offence forfeit the sum of fifty Pounds; and in case the said Sum of fifty Pounds shall be paid, levied, or recovered, such Offender shall not for the same Offence suffer any of the Pains or Penalties inflicted by the said recited Act, etc."

APPENDIX B.

ANNO DECIMO OCTAVO.

GEORGII III. REGIS.

C.A.P. VIII.

An Act to enable His Majesty to license a Theatre in the City of BRISTOL.

" Whereas a licensed Theatre or Playhouse is desired in the City of Bristol: May it therefore please your Majesty that it may be enacted; and be it enacted by the King's most Excellent Majesty by and with the Advice and Consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the Authority of the same, That so much of an Act of Parliament, made in the Tenth Year of His late Majesty's reign (intituled, An Act to explain and amend so much of an Act, made in the Twelfth Year of the Reign of Queen ANNE, intituled, *An Act for Reducing the Laws relating to Rogues, Vagabonds, sturdy Beggars,*

and Vagrants, into one Act of Parliament; and for the more effectual punishing such Rogues, Vagabonds, sturdy Beggars, and Vagrants, and sending them whither they ought to be sent; as relates to common Players of Interludes ;) whereby all Persons are discharged to represent any Entertainment of the Stage whatever, in virtue of Letters Patent from His Majesty, or by the Licence of the Lord Chamberlain of His Majesty's Household for the time being, except within the liberties of Westminster, or where His Majesty is residing for the time being ; be, and the same is hereby repealed, with respect to the said City of Bristol, and that it shall and may be lawful for His Majesty, His Heirs and Successors, to grant Letters Patent for establishing a Theatre or Playhouse within the said City of Bristol, which shall be entitled to all the Privileges, and subjected to all the Regulations, to which any Theatre or Playhouse in Great Britain is entitled and Subjected."

FINIS.

APPENDIX C.

Letters Patent to George Daubeny Esquire.

April 27th. 18 Geo. 3. 1778.

" GEORGE THE THIRD by the Grace of God of Great Britain, France and Ireland King Defender of the Faith and so forth TO ALL to whom these presents shall come greeting Whereas by an Act made in this present session of Parliament, Intituled (An Act to Enable his Majesty to licence a Theatre in the city of Bristol) so much of an Act which passed in Parliament

in the Tenth year of the Reign of our late Royal Grandfather King George the second of Glorious and happy memory Intituled (An Act to Explain and Amend so much of an Act made in the Twelfth year of the Reign of Queen Anne Intituled An Act for Reducing the Laws Relating to Rogues Vagabonds Sturdy Beggars and Vagrants into one Act of Parliament and for the more Effectual punishing such Rogues Vagabonds Sturdy Beggars and Vagrants and Sending them whither they ought to be sent) as Relates to Common players of Interludes whereby all persons are discharged to Represent any Entertainment of the Stage Whatsoever in Virtue of Letters Patent from us or by Licence from the Chamberlain of our Household for the time being Except within the liberties of Westminster or where We shall in our Royal person be Resident is Repealed with Respect to the said City of Bristol And it is thereby Enacted that it shall and may be Lawful for us our Heirs and Successors to Grant Letters patent for Establishing a Theatre or playhouse within the said City of Bristol Which shall be Intituled to all the privileges and Subject to all the Regulations to which any Theatre or playhouse in Great Britain is Intituled and Subject KNOW YE therefore that WEE for divers good Causes andConsiderations us thereunto moving of our Especial Grace Certain Knowledge and Meer Motion HAVE given and Granted and by these presents for us our Heirs and Successors DO Give and Grant unto George Daubeny of the City of Bristol Esquire his Executors Administrators and Assigns for and during the full End and Term of Twenty one years to Commence from the Tenth day of April in the year of our Lord One Thousand Seven Hundred and Seventy Eight full power to Licence and Authority to Establish a Theatre or playhouse in the said City of

Bristol and to gather form Entertain Govern priviledge and Keep a Company of Comedians for our Service and Exercise and to Act such Tragedies plays Operas and other Entertainments of the Stage only as have already been or shall hereafter be Licensed by the Chamberlain of our Household within the said Theatre or playhouse to be Established in the said City of Bristol where the said George Daubeny his Executors administrators and assigns can best be fitted for that purpose during the said term of Twenty one years (Except at such time or times as the Chamberlain of our Household shall Judge it proper and Expedient either on Account of Mournings or otherwise to Stop Entertainments of the Stage) which said Company of Comedians shall consist of such Numbers as the said George Daubeny his Executors administrators and assigns shall from time to time think Meet AND WEE do hereby for us our Heirs and Successors Grant unto the said George Daubeny his Executors administrators and assigns full power Licence and Authority to permit such persons at and during the pleasure of him the said George Daubeny his Executors administrators and assigns as Aforesaid that it shall and may be lawful to and for the said George Daubeny his Executors administrators and assigns from time to time to Act plays and Entertainments of the Stage of all sorts peaceably and Quietly without the Impeachment or Impediment of any person or persons whatsoever for the Honest Recreation of such as shall desire to see the same Nevertheless under the Regulations hereinafter mentioned and such other as the said George Daubeny his Executors administrators and assigns from time to time in his or their discretion shall find Reasonable and Necessary for our Service AND WEE do hereby for us our Heirs and Successors Grant to him the said

George Daubeny his Executors administrators and assigns as aforesaid that it shall be Lawful to and for the said George Daubeny his Executors administrators and assigns to take and Receive of such of our Subjects as shall Resort to the said Theatre to see and hear such Tragedies plays Operas or other Entertainments of the Stage whatsoever such sum or sums of Money as either have been Accustomably given or taken in the like Kind or that shall be thought reasonable by the said George Daubeny his Executors administrators and assigns in Regard of the Great Expense and Building Hiring and fitting up the said Theatre and of Scenes Music and such other Decorations as are usual and necessary And further for us our Heirs and Successors We do hereby Give and Grant unto the said George Daubeny his Executors administrators and assigns full power to make such Allowances out of the Money which shall be received by the Acting such Tragedies plays Operas and other Entertainments of the Stage as aforesaid to the Actors and other persons Employed in the Acting Representing or in any Quality Whatsoever in and about the said Theatre or playhouse as the said George Daubeny his Executors administrators and assigns shall think fit And that the said company shall be under the sole Government and Authority of the said George Daubeny his Executors administrators and assigns and all Scandalous and mutinous persons shall from time to time by him be Ejected and disabled from playing in the said Theatre And for the better Attaining our Royal purposes in this behalf Wee have thought fit hereby to declare that henceforth no Representations be Admitted on the Stage by Virtue or under Colour of these our Letters patent whereby the Christian Religion in General or the Church of England may in any manner Suffer

Reproach Strictly Inhibiting every degree of Abuse or Misrepresentation of Sacred Characters tending to Expose Religion itself and to bring it into Contempt And that no such Character be otherwise introduced or placed in any other Light than such as may enhance the Just Esteem of those who truly Answer the End of their Sacred function Wee further Enjoin the Strictest Regard to such Representations as any way Concern Civil polity or the Constitution of our Government That those may Contribute to the Support of our Sacred Authority and the preservation of Order and good Government And it being our Royal Will and pleasure that for the future Our Theatres may be Instrumental to the promotion of Virtue and Instructive to Human Life Wee do hereby Command and Enjoin that no New play or any Old or Revised play be Acted under the Authority hereby Granted Containing any passages or Expressions Offensive to piety and good Manners until the same be Corrected and purged by the said Governor from all such Offensive and Scandalous passages and Expressions And these our Letters patent or the Inrolement or Exemplification thereof shall be in and by all things good firm valid sufficient and Effectual in the Law according to the true Intent and Meaning thereof anything in these presents Contained to the Contrary thereof in any wise Notwithstanding or any other Omission Imperfection Defect Matter Cause or thing Whatsoever to the Contrary thereof in any wise Notwithstanding IN WITNESS whereof WEE have Caused these our letters to be made patent WITNESS ourself at Westminster the Twenty Seventh day of April in the Eighteenth Year of our Reign.

By Writ of Privy Seal.

WILMOT."

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